University of Alberta

Food and Philosophy: Eating as a Way of Life

by

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Abstract

Some believe that modern Western philosophy privileges the sense of vision because it is directed away from the body towards a static, immutable object--truth. Plato, Aristotle and Descartes are often cited as the paradigmatic ocularcentric philosophers, but I contend that a re-evaluation of their works suggests only a weak form of ocularcentrism. Because ocularcentrism is indicative of a view of philosophy as a disembodied intellectual pursuit, re-reading these authors as only weakly ocularcentric also helps to justify a shared perspective on philosophy as a set of embodied, personal exercises directed towards virtuous living. I suggest that a practice of discriminative eating, which values the proximate senses, can contribute to a contemporary form of the philosophical life: it can shape us into better people by cultivating important characteristics and foster new opportunities for better living by facilitating a deeper connection with the food that we consume.

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List of Abbreviations

Aristotle:

EN	*Nicomachean Ethics*
DA	*De Anima (On the Soul)*
SS	*Sense and Sensibilia*

Descartes:

AT VII	*Meditations On First Philosophy*
AT XI	*The Passions of the Soul*
AT IXB	*Principles of Philosophy*

I use standard citation form for Descartes's works, according to Ch. Adam and P. Tannery's (AT) *OEuvres de Descartes*, 11 vols., 1964–1974. I also provide the page reference for J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch's (CSM) English translation.

Plato:

Rep.	*Republic*

§ I – Introduction

Sumba, an isolated Indonesian island, supports a tribal culture which has taste descriptors thoroughly embedded in its colloquial discourse. According to anthropological research conducted by Joel Kuipers, the notions of 'bitter' (*póddu*) and 'bland' (*kóba*) form a set of contraries in Weyéwa culture that, though primarily used to describe the ritual status of certain objects, are appropriated for descriptive use in a more informal, daily context as well (Kuipers 1991, 112). Within such contexts, 'bitter' and 'bland' come to signify prohibition and permission, respectively. So, Weyéwa will use these terms (*póddu* and *kóba*) to indicate whether rice fields, water-buffalo and even women may be appropriate for 'consumption' (122). Social relations and discourse hence become mediated through taste and its descriptors.[1]

Our habitual use of visual metaphors mirrors the use of taste metaphors in Weyéwa discourse. The brief introductory paragraph of Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes* seeks to draw attention to this very phenomenon: it includes twenty-one visual metaphors that have become fully integrated into colloquial English.[2] Such a

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[1] That a great emphasis is conferred upon taste experiences (as opposed to other sense experiences) within Weyéwa culture is further demonstrated both by the marked difference in how actual sense experiences are described and by the signification of taste experiences within social contexts: (I) Sense experiences other than taste are conveyed by a single adjective. For example, 'red' (*rára*) can adequately describe the appearance of a horse, and 'rustling' (*sásso*) can adequately describe the sound of a person walking through the jungle (Kuipers 1991,120). Taste descriptions, however, generally include modifiers. Sour tastes, for instance, are described within a range of 'too sour', 'really sour', 'really too sour', 'rather sour', 'more sour, and 'not sour enough' (121). (II) Kuipers observes that "in any Weyéwa social encounter between same-sex age-mates that lasts for more than a few seconds, small, shoulder-slung baskets of ingredients for a betel or areca nut chew are obligatorily exchanged, the first step in a discrete, marked event called a social visit, *pakúkulla wékkina.* This masticatory is a mild stimulant recognized to have antiseptic and medicinal properties, but is chewed mostly for its taste" (Kuipers 1991, 114). When this exchange happens at a host's home, the host generally provides his guest with betel fruits, slaked lime and areca nuts. Kuipers notes that the quality of these items signals not only the financial status of the host, but also the host's disposition towards and opinion of the guest.

[2] Jay notes that a similar phenomenon is obvious in both French and German (1994, 3).

phenomenon, some claim, is symptomatic of our visually-oriented society. Following Aristotle's initial valuation of the senses, the Western tradition generally assumes a hierarchical ordering of vision, and then hearing, over the senses of smell, taste and touch.[3] No doubt vision is also tremendously important in Weyewa culture, although it is difficult to determine whether a Weyéwa sense hierarchy exists, and what shape such a hierarchy takes based on this information alone.[4] Kuipers' report does indicate, however, a certain esteem for the sense of taste: taste, and its various instantiations, conveys cultural meaning, and the ability to discriminate between taste sensations is a valued attribute. This esteem contrasts with what some hold to be the implicit denigration of certain senses, especially taste, touch and smell, within some facets of modern Western society.

The Western sense hierarchy is not only evident in the common use of the English language; it is also reflected in common ways of self-understanding and in a

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[3] Immanuel Kant offers a revised hierarchy, albeit his version of the sense hierarchy still privileges vision and hearing and denigrates taste and smell. He considers vision, hearing and touch to be superior senses because they are more able to facilitate empirical knowledge and 'cognition of an object'; taste and smell, which he considers to be subjective, are less useful in this regard (Kant 2005, 210). For more on Kant's orientation towards the senses, see Kant 2005, Korsmeyer 1999, especially pp. 54-60, and Sweeney 2007, especially pp. 120-124.

[4] As a side note, one might consider it strange if the Weyéwa, or any other culture, do actually privilege taste (or smell or touch) over vision and hearing. Along these lines, one might argue that vision and hearing can more effectively warn of environmental dangers: an individual may most successfully avoid being harmed or killed by predators, fires, or stampeding livestock by sensing the presence of these dangers before actually coming into contact with them. But while vision and hearing may in fact enable a subject to evade these scenarios, such a claim fails to recognize that individuals generally employ all of their senses (to the extent that they are capable) as means to survival, whether or not they are conscious of such employment. So smell and taste, too, play a fundamental role in alerting individuals to potential dangers. A particular scent or odour can warn of food spoilage, of a distant fire or of the presence of leaking methane gas when sight or sound cannot. Similarly, a food's bitter taste can alert a subject to the presence of a toxin prior to her ingestion of it, thus avoiding potentially fatal consequences (Rozin and Vollmecke 1986, 436). Sometimes it is just not possible to detect an environmental harm before coming into physical contact with it. Even further still, individuals use their various sensory capacities not only to defend themselves against threats, but also to sustain themselves: from a survival standpoint, eating is just as necessary as not getting eaten, and often an individual's sense of taste can aid her attainment of nourishing fare. (A sweet taste, for example, often indicates the presence of calories in a food item [Rozin and Vollmecke 1986, 436]).

long tradition of philosophical discourse. In recent years, some have called attention to the privileging of vision within the history of Western philosophical discourse (Jay 1994, Jonas 1966, Korsmeyer 1999, Levin 1999). In *The Philosopher's Gaze*, for example, David Levin proposes a 'discursive construction' of a contemplative vision from Plato through to John Locke (Levin 1999, 12-13; 412-415). Many contend that, beginning with Plato's cave, we find reason, knowledge of the immutable Forms and understanding of Truth aligned with the experience of seeing – and being dazzled by – a brilliant light (*Rep.* 518a).[5] In Medieval thought, the light of the Forms is replaced by the light of God.[6] Early modern philosophers, especially René Descartes, seem to inherit a preference for this ostensibly noble sense too. In his *Meditations*, Descartes only ascends to 'clear and distinct' ideas, which are made evident to him by 'the light of reason.'[7] Ocularcentric discourse also permeates modern empiricism.[8] For instance, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke describes the process of knowledge acquisition by appeal to a camera obscura (Jay 1994, 85).[9] It can quickly seem that ocularcentrism, which supposedly initially installed itself in ancient thought,

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[5] Earlier in the *Republic*, Socrates tells us that 'true philosophers' are "those who love the sight of truth" (475e).

[6] On divine illumination see, for example, Augustine's *Confessions*: "the soul needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself, so that it can participate in truth, because it is not itself the nature of truth. You will light my lamp, O Lord. My God you will enlighten my darkness [...]" (1998, IV. xv, 25). See also Jay 1994, 37.

[7] Descartes draws an explicit analogy between vision and philosophy in the Preface to the *Principles of Philosophy*. He contends that "Living without philosophy is exactly like having one's eyes closed without ever trying to open them; and the pleasure of seeing everything which our sight reveals is in no way comparable to the satisfaction accorded by knowledge of the things which philosophy enables us to discover" (AT IXB 3/CSM I 180).

[8] I borrow this phrase from Martin Jay, who notes various versions of this term: 'oculocentrism', 'ocularocentrism' (1994, 3).

[9] In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke contends: "external and internal Sensation are the only passages that I can find, of Knowledge, to the Understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the Windows by which light is let into this *dark Room*. For, methinks, the *Understanding* is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without; would the Pictures coming into such a dark Room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the Understanding of a Man, in reference to all Objects of sight, and the *Ideas* of them" (1979, II. xi, 17).

has been passed down through a long line of philosophers in the Western tradition. The flipside to this alleged discursive construction of the philosopher's vision is the explicit denigration of taste, particularly – and paradoxically – within the realm of 18th and 19th century aesthetics. In *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*, Carolyn Korsmeyer notes that John Baillie, Edmund Burke and G.W.F. Hegel join Kant in making explicit condemnations of the sense of taste, yet appeal to 'taste' as a metaphor for aesthetic sensibility (Korsmeyer 1999, 45).[10]

How is it that the sense of vision, and to a lesser degree the sense of hearing, are so fundamentally different from the senses of smell and taste? Why is it that the senses of vision and hearing find privilege within Western philosophical culture, while the others are denigrated? What makes vision a primary candidate for the metaphorical signification of Truth and reason? Some suggest that the privileging of certain senses, and the denigration of others, maps onto the distinction between 'distal' senses (vision and hearing) and 'proximate' ones (smell, taste and touch).[11] Korsmeyer offers three reasons for the denigration of the proximate senses, which she claims become apparent as early as Plato and Aristotle (Korsmeyer 1999, 24-26). First, experiences of vision and hearing require that there be a physical distance between the perceiving organ and the perceived object. Korsmeyer notes that during these processes, attention is drawn away from the body and the experience appears to

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[10] Korsmeyer also makes note of the irony of appealing to the metaphor 'taste' for aesthetics in *The Taste Culture Reader*. Here, she contends that "among the paradoxes that surround taste, few loom larger than the fact that taste is supposed to be little more than a bodily sensation, yet at the same time provides the metaphor for the finest cultivation of perceptual experience" (Korsmeyer 2005, 6). For further discussion of the connection between aesthetics, 'taste' and the denigration of the sense of taste, see Korsmeyer 1999, pp. 38-63 and Korsmeyer 2005, pp. 195-234.

[11] It should be noted that smell is not a distal sense: something can only be smelled if its odour molecules make contact with the receptor cells in the percipient's olfactory cleft, which is located high up in her nasal cavity (Geldard 1972, 443-445). Hence, when understood in this way, the process of olfaction requires that the perceiving organ and the perceived object be in close physical contact.

occur outside of the percipient. This leads to the impression of a phenomenally objective experience. Korsmeyer here echoes Hans Jonas's analysis in "The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses." The physical distance between a perceiving organ and a perceived object helps establish a marked distinction between subject and object: "The gain is the concept of objectivity, of the thing as it is in itself as distinct from the thing as it affects me [...]" (Jonas 1966, 147). In contrast, the processes of taste and touch necessarily require that the perceiving organ be in contact with the perceived object. These perceptions feel as if they take place 'in' the body (Jonas 1966, 25).

Korsmeyer follows Jonas in suggesting a second, related reason: since the distal senses perceive objects that are apparently removed from the perceiving subject, they become directed to the pursuit of an objective knowledge. Jonas contends that the distinction between subject and object brings about "the whole idea of *theoria* and theoretical truth" (1966, 147). This sense of objectivity contrasts with the subjectivity, temporality and physicality that seem to be inherent in proximate sensory experiences.

An often considered further reason for the denigration of the proximate senses is due to their apparently unique connection with pleasure. Aesthetic encounters facilitated by the distal senses, in contrast, rarely lead to such warnings against overindulgence. Korsmeyer notes that "it is customary to think of objects of the cognitive senses as those that also may be beautiful; but objects of the bodily senses are at best pleasant or sensuously enjoyable, even in their most sophisticated and refined forms" (1999, 26). Since smell, taste and touch are experienced 'in' the body, any pleasure that they bring is profoundly 'bodily' in nature. This seems to be

corroborated by warnings, particularly throughout Ancient and Medieval thought, to regulate or avoid bodily pleasures, and to control the appetites. I believe the connection between proximate senses and bodily pleasures might be further illuminated by appeal to the distinction between rational and non-rational animals. Sustenance is the most basic requirement for all animals; it occurs by ingesting foodstuff, an act in which the senses of smell, taste and touch are most intimately bound. The satisfaction of an appetite for sustenance leads to physical relief from hunger at the very least, though perhaps even to more intense forms of pleasure. Hence, the ability to reason, to see truth, and to avoid consciously falling prey to bodily appetites distinguishes human beings from other animals. Gratuitous fulfillment of the animal appetites (and with it an indulgence of the senses of smell, taste and touch) signals that a human being is morally and intellectually impoverished.

Connected with the proximate sensory experience of bodily pleasure is a further phenomenon that one might suggest explains the development of ocularcentrism within Western philosophy: that some philosophical commitments to the control of bodily pleasures arose not only to uphold a distinction between rational and non-rational animals, but to manage the amount and intensity of pain that individuals were prone to experience.[12] In *The Quest for Certainty*, John Dewey proposes that the Western philosophical tradition inherited this way of doing things from a cultural phenomenon that pervaded pre-industrial societies. In such societies, the basic necessities of life (such as the attainment of sustenance and the construction of shelter) required bodily exertion and entailed the corresponding risks of disease,

[12] Neither Korsmeyer nor Jonas entertains this possible explanation.

injury or death.[13] Dewey contends that the experience and risk of physical suffering consequently motivated the privileging of intellectual endeavours over bodily ones: by investing themselves in intellectual and mental exercises, individuals could direct their attention to focusing on an inner capacity that did not risk physical pain (Dewey 1988, 4-5). Pain, which is often located *in* the body, is most intimately bound up with the proximate senses (smell, taste, and especially touch). And so, along these lines, one might suggest that Western culture privileges the distal senses because they are associated less closely with physical pain.[14]

In light of recent interest in the connection between ocularcentrism and philosophy, we might be compelled to question precisely *how* modern Western philosophy is ocularcentric. What does 'ocularcentrism' within the context of philosophy mean? While many commentators draw attention to the fact that the modern Western philosophical tradition privileges vision, few differentiate between various manifestations of ocularcentric philosophy. Ocularcentrism is generally aligned with intellectual enquiry. The sense of vision has achieved philosophical prominence because vision offers us a 'window' onto the world. I take its pre-eminence within this context to be particularly analogical: vision can provide us with important and seemingly objective information about the world much like rational

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[13] This experience particularly opposes the state of, or potential for, physical suffering in industrialized societies, where technology accomplishes many of the tasks that formerly required bodily exertion.

[14] While this story may account for how ocularcentrism has become strengthened and more deeply engrained in Western culture and philosophy over time, I am reluctant to consider the phenomenon of pain to have been singularly responsible for its particular emergence. First, this story fails to explain why vision has come to be esteemed over hearing, given that both are distal senses and that neither is more intimately connected with the experience of physical pain than the other. Furthermore, it accounts for the experience of only one form of pain, a physical pain that takes place in the body, to the neglect of other forms which are sometimes facilitated by the distal senses. For example, though vision and hearing are not bound up with physical suffering, they are often the conduits by which individuals learn of, and experience, the pain of others. (In fact, seeing or hearing another's physical suffering is often worse than experiencing one's own physical suffering.)

enquiry can provide us with knowledge of immutable truths. The sense of vision, then, becomes aligned with both reason proper and intellectual knowledge. But I wish to suggest that there are different degrees or instantiations of ocularcentrism.

One form of ocularcentrism consists in an esteem for both reason and intellectual knowledge, and a correlative neglect (or even denigration) of bodily capacities. It is likely this manifestation of ocularcentrism that philosophers such as Carolyn Korsmeyer have in mind when they imply that the body, and with it the corresponding proximate senses, cannot be easily embraced by philosophy. For example, Korsmeyer argues:

> The neglect [of the bodily senses over time] is not easily mended. One cannot simply add taste and the other *bodily* senses to philosophy *as it has evolved* and correct theories accordingly to be more comprehensive in their treatment of the sensory worlds. [...] philosophy is (or at least used to be) built upon the attention to the eternal over the temporal, to the universal over the particular, to theory over practice. Taste is a sense that is not suited to advance the first term of any of these pairs. (Korsmeyer 1999, 37; emphasis added)

Korsmeyer gestures towards a conception of philosophy that is directed towards intellectual knowledge and universal truth, and she believes that this conception of philosophy cannot easily accommodate greater attention towards the temporal, particular body and its correlative - proximate - senses. I agree that some models of philosophy may in fact be predicated upon attention to the eternal over the temporal, the universal over the particular, and theory over practice, and such models would

suggest a strong form of ocularcentrism: pursuit of reason and objectivity could entail that the subject-body and its most subjective senses are irrelevant at best, since the insights that they lend seem to resist bearing any universal applicability. This characterization, however, cannot apply to the whole of the modern Western philosophical tradition. In fact, I believe that a reinterpretation of the origins and trajectory of philosophy *can* permit us to legitimately 'add taste and the other senses to philosophy as it has evolved.' The history of philosophy is rich with examples in which the cultivation of personal capacities and attention to the body can facilitate the attainment of philosophical ends – namely virtue, wisdom, and the good life. Within this context, the lines between eternal and temporal, universal and particular, and theory and practice are often blurred. This model of philosophy suggests a weaker form of ocularcentrism: it still privileges vision by valorising reason and intellectual enquiry, but it also takes account of the individual; it may even demonstrate some esteem for the other senses, as well as for the subject-body from which these senses emerge. I take this form to be constitutive of philosophy as a way of artful living and as a project of self-care.

Philosophy as a project of self-care finds its roots in Hellenistic philosophy. It consists in a personal practice of cultivating virtues such as wisdom (which requires engagement in rational activity), steadfastness, temperance and moderation, thereby shaping oneself into a good citizen. Ultimately, it seeks to train one in how best to live and often has greater implications for one's place within a community.[15] Those who call attention to this reading of the tradition, such as Pierre Hadot, highlight the fact

[15] The specific concept of how 'best' to live varies by school and author within this tradition. In what follows, I consider how ideas of good living can value embodied capacities within the specific contexts of Plato's middle dialogues, Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom and Descartes's moral philosophy.

that philosophy in this context constitutes a set of spiritual exercises that transforms how one is situated in the world. In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Hadot argues that this model of philosophy is predicated upon an activity of 'inner transformation,' and, with reference to Aristotle specifically, Hadot contends that philosophical practice is a 'life according to the mind.' So to a limited extent, ocularcentrism does pervade this tradition: Plato makes explicit that the greatest good consists in reason and in seeing the Forms, and Aristotle notes that vision is the most noble, and most rational, sense. But as we shall soon see, some virtues, as constitutive ends to knowledge and the good life, are very often *embodied* goods. The body and its various capacities are not always denigrated in the service of rational enquiry and objective knowledge; the development of bodily capacities and the pursuit of objects that are not static or objective can even support these ends. For example, in the *Republic*, Socrates emphasizes that athletic prowess and an appreciation of musical harmony (which requires an ability to hear and discriminate the multifarious elements of musical composition) cultivate the character of the guardians and of the future philosophers. Athletic training, for instance, develops and strengthens the capacities of steadfastness and courage that are necessary to engagement in rational dialectic and enquiry, and ultimately to the achievement of knowledge. As such, steadfastness and courage are not only abilities that figure into one aspect of the philosopher's life; they are characteristics that permeate the philosopher's whole being.[16] When conceived in this

[16] The very project of cultivating embodied virtues is structured in a way that cannot be characterised by ocularcentrism. When we consider the philosophical life that Socrates proposes in the *Republic*, for example, we see that becoming steadfast and courageous through athleticism brings with it highs and lows. Given the variable and fluctuating training process of athleticism, the high value attributed to athletic prowess suggests that there is more to philosophy than gazing at the static, immutable Forms. As I discuss in the next chapter, embodied philosophical practice might valorise reason (and, by

way, it becomes evident that bodily endeavours and intellectual endeavours are not altogether distinct, nor are bodily endeavours neglected or subordinated in pursuit of intellectual ones. They are united in the achievement of common ends. The self, as an embodied entity, is an important site of virtue.

It is within this art of living tradition that I offer discriminative eating as a contemporary constituent of philosophical practice. I wish to suggest that we can shape ourselves into better human beings by weaving reflection and cognition throughout our whole embodied lives, rather than limiting our use of these capacities to our pursuit of intellectual ends. It is easy just to satisfy our appetites for hunger, and thereby relegate our bodies to a minor supporting role in our other endeavours. But, the activity of discerning nuances among objects of experience such as food items, which requires an intentional, crafted awareness, motivates the development of higher forms of embodied cognition.

I shall begin by investigating practices of self-care, constitutive of the art of living philosophical tradition. I introduce the tradition by appeal to Hadot's project in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, though I offer a revised interpretation of what, for some of the more notable figures often cited as part of this tradition, constitutes a life of philosophical practice. While it is possible for Hellenistic, and even Cartesian, philosophy to be interpreted as a sole valorisation of rational enquiry, I suggest that these models point towards a form of philosophical practice that is fundamentally embodied. I direct the majority of my analysis to Plato's middle dialogues, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*. Specifically, I demonstrate

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analogy, vision), but as an activity it is not altogether modelled on the pursuit of a static, immutable object. This fact contributes to what I take to be its weak form of ocularcentrism.

how, if we look beyond the philosophical veneer that seems dedicated only to the achievement of a rational, immutable, and immaterial knowledge, Socratic self-knowledge and Aristotelian character ethics can actually be taken to value certain bodily endeavours and express some esteem for senses other than vision. Subsequently, I consider how Descartes's larger model of philosophy suggests a similar position: although his *Meditations on First Philosophy* by itself suggests some suspicion of the body (since the body cannot facilitate the achievement of clear and distinct knowledge of first principles), his *Passions of the Soul*, and specifically his notion of morally virtuous 'generosity', demonstrates more fully how the body is necessarily implicated in the philosophical life. By re-interpreting what each of these authors considers to constitute philosophical practice I wish to show (i) that although each of these models privileges rational inquiry and the sense of vision, each proposes only a weak form of ocularcentrism; and (ii) that the embodied self is often taken to be a site of virtue.

In Section III, I shall consider more specifically how we can engage in a contemporary form of embodied philosophical practice. I shall suggest that we can return to the body (or, more precisely, the embodied self) as a site of moral virtue and happiness. Ultimately, I argue that by attending to the body and engaging in a practice of discriminative eating, we can: (i) cultivate certain virtues, such as moderation, steadfastness, and what I call 'personal agency,' and develop a habit of care and attention that can be applied to other endeavours; and (ii) develop an 'embodied knowledge' that could offer new means of self-understanding and also lead to a deeper connection with the food that we consume, thereby fostering new opportunities for

better living. Further, such a form of embodied knowledge can even support and enrich certain aesthetic and moral or socio-political projects. Finally, I shall consider more concretely how a practice of discriminative eating may take shape. What is involved in eating discriminately versus simply eating? How can we employ our senses in the service of this end? And how do we go about developing this embodied knowledge in the first place? Ultimately, I aim to demonstrate that while modern Western culture and, more specifically, philosophy, may bear certain ocularcentric commitments, there is a legitimate interpretive strategy that recognises a tradition with greater potential for respecting the body and its proximate senses.

§ II – Philosophy, Embodiment and Arts of Living

§ II.i: Introduction

The title of this thesis, "Eating as a Way of Life," is a playful gesture towards the art of living philosophical tradition which, through the efforts of philosophers such as Pierre Hadot, has enjoyed a recent renaissance. Hadot recognizes that the practice of philosophy has the potential to transform its practitioner's mode of being in the world, and he calls attention to the ancient techniques of the self that underpin such a practice. My purpose in this section is to draw attention to how the practice of philosophy can give style to one's self and to one's way of living. I will argue that philosophy as a way of living and as a mode of self-care is an embodied practice, encompassing multiple dimensions of the philosopher-practitioner's person. The understanding of philosophy I sketch here will create a context in which the practice of discriminative taste may be situated.

I begin by drawing on Hadot's project in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, in which he claims that Hellenistic philosophy consists of a set of 'spiritual exercises.' By gesturing towards a conception of philosophy as a particular, personal endeavour, Hadot's project will set the stage for my own interpretation of this philosophical tradition. Given how Hadot opposes interpretations of Hellenistic philosophy as a pursuit of a static, immutable truth, I take his rendering of the Hellenistic practice of self-care to imply a weak form of ocularcentrism: his interpretation places less emphasis on objective and universal goals than it does on personal, particular transformation. But I believe that Hellenistic philosophical practice actually implies an even weaker form of ocularcentrism. That is, by emphasizing the 'inner'

transformation of the mind and spirit, Hadot neglects to take account of the fact that spiritual exercises cannot be extricated from an embodied condition. I dedicate the balance of this chapter to a demonstration of how the body, whose capacities are particular and subjective, can be the site of virtue within this philosophical context.

The art of living philosophical tradition is not limited to Hellenistic philosophy. Many commentators who draw attention to the tradition, including Hadot, also acknowledge modern contributors such as Descartes. In what follows, I demonstrate how Plato, Aristotle and Descartes each render models of the philosophical life that require that one attend to oneself as a fundamentally embodied subject. I limit my investigation of ancient techniques of the self to Plato's notion of the tripartite self and his training program for its education, as depicted in his middle dialogues (*Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*), and to Aristotle's notion of character flourishing in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. With regard to the latter, I draw on Aristotle's notion of the connoisseur of taste; my primary intention in appealing to this example is to demonstrate how philosophical practice can extend to and encompass embodied pursuits, though I also take it to bear specific relevance for my proposed project, which I discuss further in the following chapter. Finally, when considering Descartes's contribution to this tradition, I insist that we take account not only of the often-cited *Meditations on First Philosophy* (where he implies some suspicion of the body) but also of *The Passions of the Soul*, where he offers an account of personal exercises and moral virtue that requires attention to the body. While some may be inclined to suggest that each of these models valorises non-physical, mental capacities to the exclusion of other endeavours, my interpretation will show that, although they do

valorise reason, they do not denigrate or neglect the body in pursuit of it. Rather, these most paradigmatic ambassadors of the art of living philosophical tradition necessitate that this practice take flight as an embodied enterprise.

§ II.ii: Hadot's Notion of the 'Spiritual Exercise'

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Hadot diagnoses an "abyss between philosophical theory and philosophizing as living action" (1995, 268) and highlights the fact that contemporary philosophy has strayed from its practical roots. He contends that Hellenistic philosophical practice consists of 'spiritual exercises.' Hadot's use of the term 'exercise' is derived from the Greek *askesis*, which refers to a sort of practice or disciplined training; it is thoroughly distinct from Christian asceticism. The notion of a 'spiritual' exercise cannot be traced to Greek etymology, though Hadot does qualify his choice of term:

> It is [...] necessary to use this term, I believe, because none of the other adjectives we could use – 'psychic', 'moral', 'ethical', 'intellectual', 'of thought', 'of the soul' – covers all of the aspects of reality that we want to describe. Since, in these exercises, it is thought which, as it were, takes itself as its own subject-matter, and seeks to modify itself, it would be possible for us to speak in terms of 'thought exercises'. (Hadot 1995, 81-82)

By describing philosophical practice as a form of 'spiritual exercise,' Hadot emphasizes the development of the full human being and implicitly contrasts askesis with what he takes to be the de-personalization of contemporary Western philosophical enquiry.

Hadot argues that attempts at modifying and improving the self constitute a project of self-formation that seeks to realize man's rational nature (102). With reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*, Hadot contends that an important parallel between physical exercises and spiritual exercises underlies this project of self-formation:

> Each in its own way, all [Hellenistic] schools believed in the freedom of the will, thanks to which man has the possibility to modify, improve and realize himself. Underlying this conviction is the *parallelism between physical and spiritual exercises*: just as, by dint of repeated physical exercises, athletes give new form and strength to their bodies, so the philosopher develops his strength of soul, modifies his inner climate, transforms his vision of the world, and finally, his entire being. This analogy seems all the more self-evident in that the *gymnasium*, the place where physical exercises were practiced, was the same place where philosophy lessons were given; in other words, it was also the place for training in *spiritual* gymnastics. (102; emphasis added)

I appreciate Hadot's attempt to demonstrate how physical exercises and spiritual exercises might mirror one another, but his articulation of this parallel reveals a flawed understanding of what, for Plato at least, constitutes spiritual exercises. Hadot explicitly distinguishes between two types of exercise here: (i) physical exercises directed at the improvement and transformation of the physical body; and (ii) spiritual

exercises directed at the improvement and transformation of the soul.[17] For Hadot, they are parallel because they are taught in the same physical space and, more importantly, because they each require the cultivation of the right type of spirit (or will) that could facilitate the attainment of the respective end. But at least insofar as Hadot cashes this parallel out, there is little conversation or exchange between the two practices: the exercises are substantially distinct.[18] While Hadot implies a vague connection between physical exercises and spiritual exercises, he fails to recognize that they are, or could be, involved in the exact same project – philosophy as a way of living. In contrast to Hadot, I believe that the potential exists for these types of exercises, spiritual and physical, to intersect, and to be conducive to furthering philosophy's goal of increased self-knowledge and self-care. So, while I consider Hadot's project in *Philosophy as a Way of Life* to be noble, given how he calls attention to a strand of philosophy that is predicated upon personal exercise and transformation, I consider his project to be neglectful of the corporeal dimension of this strand; such an omission is likely due to the fact that Hadot fails to demonstrate an understanding of the extent to which Hellenistic philosophical practice itself – and not just athleticism – is essentially bound up with a fundamentally embodied existence.

§ II.iii: Embodiment and Philosophical Practice in Plato's Middle Dialogues

In what follows, I demonstrate how it might be possible to interpret Plato's philosophy as a model wherein bodily endeavours are taken to be distinct from and subordinated to immaterial, mental ones. I will suggest how such a misreading of

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[17] Elsewhere, Hadot asserts that spiritual exercises are "*inner* activities of the thought and of the will" (Hadot 1995, 128; emphasis added), thus implying a distinction between inner and outer (or body and soul) and the activities that are proper to each.

[18] That is, the exercises directed to the transformation of the body are taken to be different in kind from, and implicitly subordinated to, exercises directed to the transformation of the soul.

Plato's middle dialogues might unfold, and argue that this misreading is implicitly predicated on a somewhat dualist understanding of the self. I will subsequently clarify how Plato's conception of philosophy as a way of living importantly requires attention to the body, and demonstrate how Aristotle and even Descartes depict similar models of the philosophical life.[19]

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates seems to render the practice of philosophy as a continuous pursuit of knowledge via engagement in reasoning and pure thought alone. Knowledge within this context is directed towards objective, atemporal Truth (*Phaedo* 65d-e). Implicit in this practice is the act of dissociating the soul from the body to the greatest extent possible. Socrates emphasizes to Simmias that the body's perceptions, desires and fears interfere with the soul's attainment of knowledge. He says that "the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it" (*Phaedo* 66a) and that "no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body" (*Phaedo* 66c).[20] Further, Socrates declares that "[t]he soul reasons best

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[19] My interpretation of these models contests the belief that modern Western philosophy is necessarily built upon attention to the eternal over the temporal, the universal over the particular and the objective over the subjective (see Korsmeyer's claim above, page 8). In *The Absent Body*, Drew Leder claims that lived experience presents to us as a set of ambiguous possibilities that can lend themselves to different interpretations, and that can be taken in various directions. Leder argues that Cartesian-style dualistic interpretation of the self, where the material body is subordinated to an immaterial mind such that the mind is "an island of awareness afloat in a vast sea of insensate matter" (Leder 1990, 8), is underpinned by our interpretation of our lived experience of bodily absence (21). By appealing to Plato and Descartes specifically, Leder gestures towards a valorisation of the disembodied intellect over time: "[…] a certain telos toward disembodiment is an abiding strain of Western intellectual history. The Platonic emphasis on the purified soul, the Cartesian focus on the 'cogito' experience, pull us toward a vision of self within which an immaterial rationality is central. The body has frequently been relegated to a secondary or oppositional role, while an incorporeal reason is valorised" (Leder 1990, 3). I disagree with Leder's suggestion that Plato and Descartes are dualists who regard the body as a force of negativity, though I consider Leder's project valuable because it provides one account of how non-material, mental capacities such as rational enquiry *can* become valorised, while physical, bodily endeavours *can* become neglected or disparaged. I believe that further investigation of Leder's project in light of the revised interpretations of Plato and Descartes that I offer here would be interesting, though it exceeds the scope of my current project.

[20] In *The Art of Living*, Alexander Nehamas contends that this passage suggests there to be a connection between embodied life and disease (1998, 161).

when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality" (*Phaedo* 65c). It begins to look like the philosopher does not much concern himself with his body, including "such so-called pleasures as those of food and drink" (*Phaedo* 64d); he may even despise such pleasures.[21] And so on this view, by working towards the soul's liberation from the passionate, disruptive body, the philosopher strives for a disembodied state.

This view seems to be echoed by imagery in other dialogues. In the *Republic*, we find a unified tripartite homunculus that resides within a human being. This homunculus is composed of a multicoloured beast with many heads (some savage and some domestic), a lion and a little human being (*Rep.* 588b-e). The first represents the appetitive part of the soul (*epithumetikon*), the second the spirited part (*thumos*) and the third the rational part (*logistikon*). A particular type of desire originates in each of these three parts of the soul. The *epithumetikon* is largely driven by multifarious appetites for the pleasures of the body, such as food, drink and sex (*Rep.* 580d-e). The *thumos* will passionately fight for what it believes to be noble and honourable. As such, it often allies itself with the third part, the *logistikon*, assuming that it has not already been corrupted (*Rep.* 440b, 441a). The *logistikon* desires truth; it seeks to attain knowledge by means of judgement and rational calculation. This tripartite soul can only liberate itself from the body upon unifying its parts. Socrates tells Glaucon:

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[21] I purposefully use gendered pronouns here. Following the authors that I here investigate, I use 'he' to refer to a subject or practitioner within the context of the history of philosophy, and particularly in regards to Hellenistic philosophy. Beyond these historic contexts, when I consider the modern subject or contemporary practitioner of philosophy in the next section, I switch to feminine pronouns. Though there is far more to say about the connections between gender and philosophical practice, I will bracket this issue off since it exceeds the scope of this thesis.

> [...] that all of our words and deeds should ensure that the human being within this human being has the most control; second, that he should take care of the many-headed beast as a farmer does his animals, feeding and domesticating the gentle heads and preventing the savage ones from growing; and third, that he should make the lion's nature his ally, care for the community of all his parts, and bring them up in such a way that they will be friends with each other and himself [...]. (*Rep.* 589b)

A similar picture seems to emerge in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates illustrates the tripartite soul by appeal to an image of a charioteer (*logistikon*) with two winged horses (246a, 253d-254e). The charioteer guides the two horses, one noble and a lover of honour (*thumos*), the other lured to indecency and indulgence of its sensible desires (*epithumetikon*).[22] The chariot can fly high into the heavens and graze the immortal, moving toward its liberation from the body, if it preserves the condition of its horses' wings. Alternatively, the heaviness of the bad horse can cause the winged chariot to shed its wings, and fall back down to earth (*Phaedrus* 246c-247d).

Under the sway of modern rationalism, and without digging deeper into Plato's dialogues, a modern interpreter may become susceptible to reading Plato as a dualist, wherein appetites and passions can only serve to interfere with the disembodied state that facilitates the achievement of an objective and immutable knowledge. Another interpretation might hold that the physical body (and the senses and appetites that

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[22] "Let us liken the soul to a team of winged horses and their charioteer. [...] To begin with, our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is the opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business" (*Phaedrus* 246b).

plague it) and the passions are cultivated *only* insofar as they champion the pursuit of a universal, immutable knowledge. On this reading, the project of preventing civil war (between the horses and charioteer, or within the tripartite homunculus), of fostering proper relations between the soul's parts, and of identifying and assuaging appetitive and passionate tendencies, is directed towards the cultivation of self-knowledge and the achievement of wisdom. Although the philosopher must neither pursue bodily pleasures nor trust sensible perceptions, it is important that he become aware of, and take care of, his idiosyncratic appetites and passions, both of which are deeply rooted in his body. The gentle heads of the multiheaded appetitive beast should be fed and domesticated, the savage heads stunted from further growth. The winged horses should be comforted with both ambrosia and nectar to drink (*Phaedrus* 247e). Thus one could take the philosopher's engagement in the 'sensible' aspect of such exercises to be necessary only insofar as the passions and appetites come to be managed. Once managed, one could argue that the philosopher becomes better able to dedicate himself to a disembodied flight up towards the heavens, to a form of reasoning that is directed towards an objective, universal reality. But this interpretation also too quickly suggests that Socratic self-knowledge is premised on a dualist self, composed of both a nonphysical, rational soul and a particular, physical body, wherein physical endeavours are taken to be subordinated to – or in the service of – immaterial, mental ones.

I wish to suggest that Plato's rendering of philosophical practice requires that, though they may support the attainment of wisdom, certain bodily endeavours are in fact good in themselves. Though a subject's pursuit of wisdom requires that he not be

misled by his passions and appetites, he must seek to calm and/or cultivate his passions and appetites not just because such an activity may facilitate the attainment of a further end (such as wisdom), but because doing so is good in itself: instilling order and harmony in his soul (by unifying the soul's parts) is virtuous in and of itself. It will be helpful here to distinguish between constitutive goods and instrumental goods. Certain bodily endeavours are constitutive goods because (i) they are good in and of themselves and (ii) they are necessary for the pursuit of an end good, such as wisdom. But by interpreting bodily endeavours to be good only insofar as they aid in the attainment of an end good such as wisdom, one construes them to be instrumental goods. Such a construal erroneously implies that the body is substantially distinct from the intellect, and that bodily endeavours are to be subordinated to intellectual ones.

Plato's training program for the soul further substantiates my reading. In Books II through VII of the *Republic*, Plato describes the rigorous education of the guardian class, which is followed by many more years of strategic training for the potential philosophers who form a small, select subset of it. Hence, a guardian education is a prerequisite to the philosophical life. As a form of character training, it seeks to prepare the tripartite soul for a pursuit of knowledge by shaping it and unifying its parts. The education begins with training in music, poetry and stories, so as to introduce harmony and rhythm into the soul and foster a love of order and beauty (*Rep*. 376e; 401e). Physical training, which includes athleticism, dance and training in warfare, follows thereafter. This training component continues to shape the character by both building upon the habits already fostered by training in music and poetry

(522a), and seeking to develop new ones. For instance, in order to develop strength, agility and endurance, necessary components of most physical exercises, the subject must "continuously, strenuously and exclusively devote himself" to the exercise (539d), thus developing a certain steadfastness that will help him in other activities too, such as dialectic and rational argumentation. Since musical education and physical training both foster the development of constitutive goods (such as the virtues of moderation and courage) and prime the soul for its pursuit of wisdom, they too can comprise the spiritual exercises that engender the philosophical life. Thus, spiritual exercises cannot be conceived as solely immaterial, mental exercises because they permeate all aspects of the practitioner's embodied life. For Plato, attending to the body in certain ways can cultivate certain virtues which, in this case, are constitutive ends to a greater good that are valuable in themselves.

§ II.iv: Aristotle's Connoisseur: An Example of Embodied Philosophical Practice in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle suggests a similar orientation towards embodiment and philosophy in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and his articulation of philosophy as an artful way of living is also subject to modern misreadings. For instance, Hadot recognizes that Aristotle conceives of the philosophical life as a lifelong project of personal transformation. But, despite Hadot's emphasis on 'spiritual' exercises which encompass more than the intellectual domain, his understanding of this transformation seems limited to the intellect. In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Hadot argues that "philosophy for Aristotle was a quality of the *mind*, the result of an *inner transformation*. The form of life preached by Aristotle was the *life according to the mind*" (Hadot 1995, 269; emphasis

added).[23] Hadot's interpretation is likely founded upon Aristotle's function argument, where Aristotle argues that since the function of a human consists in the ability to reason, living well consists in the rational activity of the soul (*EN* I.7, 1097b22-1098a17). This sentiment is echoed elsewhere in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle contends that since the human essence consists in the rational intellect, the life according to the intellect is best (*EN* X.7, 1178a5-9).[24] But Hadot neglects to recognize that Aristotle's conception of the philosophical life is not solely a process of 'inner' transformation, nor is it solely constituted by rational activity. Artful living, for Aristotle, can also consist in the pursuit and achievement of excellences that are rooted in the body. Aristotle repeatedly tells us that the human being has a composite nature.[25] So, while the soul's rational activity might constitute the essence of the human being, humans are also endowed with nutritive, appetitive, perceptual and locomotive capacities (*DA* 414a30); one could not be a human being without these capacities.

It will help to consider Aristotle's distinction between two forms of wisdom, theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Theoretical wisdom concerns objective knowledge; it is directed towards things that are universal, immutable and cannot be otherwise. Practical wisdom concerns action within particular circumstances. Both forms of wisdom require the excellence of the intellect via the proper use of reason, and both can lead to the good life. But while theoretical wisdom solely necessitates

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[23] See *EN* X.7, 1178a.

[24] Aristotle asserts: "that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to intellect is best and pleasantest, since intellect more than anything else *is* man. This life therefore is also the happiest" (*EN* X, 1177a5-8).

[25] For Aristotle, a composite nature consists of a natural body that has some form of life in it (*DA* 412a15).

the perfection of the intellect, practical wisdom takes account of the human condition. That is, to achieve practical wisdom, the Aristotelian subject must both reason well and actively cultivate his character. The cultivation of character, which Aristotle considers to be 'the other kind of excellence', recognizes and embraces human embodiment and non-rational capacities:[26]

> [...] in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kind of excellence is happy; for the activities in accordance with this befit our human estate. Just acts, brave acts, and other excellent acts, we do in relation to each other, observing what is proper to each with regard to [...] all manner of actions and with regard to passions; and all of these seem to be human. Some of them seem even to arise from the body, and excellence of character to be in many ways bound up with the passions. [...] *The excellences of our composite nature are human*; so, therefore, are the life and happiness which correspond to these. *The excellence of the intellect is a thing apart* [...]. (*EN* X:8, 1178a15-22; emphasis added)

Aristotle here implies that this secondary excellence corresponds specifically to human nature, which encompasses the abilities to reflect, to discriminate, to engage one's sensory capacities and to experience passions.[27] I want to suggest that Aristotle's

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[26] As I hope will become further evident below, the particular form of secondary happiness that I am working towards unpacking entails that an individual's employment of his senses can be an excellent activity in itself.

[27] Aristotle states: "both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence" (*EN* II.6, 1106b20-

philosophical life, and with it a life of human flourishing and character development, can also come about by the achievement of fundamentally embodied excellences, which require engagement in activities that make use of some of the body's sensory capacities. I turn my attention to Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and consider one way in which this form of excellence can play out.

In III.10, Aristotle refines the standard distinction between the 'higher' senses and the 'lower' senses. As distal senses, vision and hearing are generally associated with the human intellect and reason; taste, smell and touch are considered to be 'in' the body, and thus most connected with animality. Aristotle considers senses to be 'lower' in nature, however, only insofar as they are directed to the fulfillment of the animal appetites. As such, the senses of taste and smell are only 'lower' senses if, in certain instances, they are motivated by appetite and if their satisfaction results in pleasure or delight.[28] Aristotle hence hierarchizes the senses in the following order: vision and hearing, smell, taste and then touch, with the caveat that satisfaction of an appetite (of smell, taste or touch) will push that sensory experience further down the hierarchical chain. This difference between the higher and the lower senses can be articulated another way: the unreflective character of satisfying an appetite entails that the sensory experience is more animalistic in nature, and fails to reflect a human being's nature.

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25). The Aristotelian subject cannot act wisely and attain happiness if he judges well but lacks the appropriate passions to motivate right action.

[28] The case is different with vision and hearing: Aristotle believes that one can take pleasure and delight in seeing or hearing an object because such senses are not generally motivated by appetite. He says: "[…] those who delight in objects of vision, such as colours and shapes and painting, are called neither temperate nor self-indulgent. […] And so too is it with objects of hearing; no one calls those who delight extravagantly in music or acting self-indulgent […]. Nor do we apply these names to those who delight in odour, unless it be incidentally; we do not call those self-indulgent who delight in the odour of apples or roses or incense, but rather those who delight in the odour of unguents or of dainty dishes; for self-indulgent people delight in these because these remind them of the objects of their appetite. And one may see even other people, when they are hungry, delighting in the smell of food; but to delight in this kind of thing is the mark of the self-indulgent man; for these are objects of appetite to him" (*EN* III.10, 1118a2-16).

By articulating the distinction in this way, we see that experiences of not only vision and hearing, but also of smell and taste, can be reflective. Aristotle makes this clear when he distinguishes experiences of taste from self-indulgence:

> Temperance and self-indulgence, however, are concerned with the kind of pleasures that the other animals share in, which therefore appear slavish and brutish; these are touch and taste. But even of taste they appear to make little or no use; *for the business of taste is the discriminating of flavours,*[29] *which is done by wine-tasters and people who season dishes*; but they hardly take pleasure in making these discriminations, or at least self-indulgent people do not, but in the actual enjoyment [...]. (*EN* III.10, 1118a25-30; emphasis added)

The distinction between taste and touch requires further clarification. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, on which the present analysis is based, Aristotle suggests that taste and touch are thoroughly distinct senses. And yet, in *De Anima* Aristotle contends that taste is a type of touch. What can we make of this apparent discrepancy? In order to reconcile the two lines of argument, I interpret Aristotle as suggesting that it is possible to touch without tasting, though it is not possible to taste without touching. One difference between a brute and a human is that the former merely touches, while the latter, and the nobler, has the capacity to *taste*, a sort of

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[29] Aristotle elucidates the various types of flavours in *De Anima*: "The species of flavour are, as in the case of colour, simple, i.e. the two contraries, the sweet and the bitter, secondary, viz. the succulent and the saline; between these come the pungent, the harsh, the astringent, and the acid; these pretty well exhaust the varieties of flavour" (*DA* II.10, 422b10-15).

discriminative touching (*DA* II.10, 422a7). Both touch and taste are forms of cognition that emerge from the perceptual soul, though taste is the more refined power.

Aristotle here implies that there is a great difference between the connoisseur and the glutton. The connoisseur is a connoisseur because he engages in the activity of discriminating among flavours - an activity that can necessitate the activity of rational capacities, perceptual capacities and the right passions. First, the connoisseur must reason that it is best to be and act more like a human being than like an animal. Since humans have the most refined capacities to taste (which is a higher form of touch), then he, as a human, should seek to actualize this discriminative capacity to the best of his ability.[30] This requires that the connoisseur actively engage and refine his perceptual capacities when eating; his rational power must cooperate with his perceptual power. But in order to coordinate his rational power with his perceptual power, the connoisseur must cultivate the right will: he must have the will to act appropriately, such that he actualizes his human condition to the highest degree possible and does not take pleasure in the brutish enjoyment of food and drink. That is, he must wish to distinguish himself as a human being from other forms of life by cultivating a temperate, and thus virtuous, character. This activity requires that the connoisseur engage in a project of self-training and habituation.[31] He must not only learn how to avoid finding indulgent pleasure in food, but also learn how to discriminate among flavours. In contrast to the connoisseur, we see the Aristotelian

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[30] Aristotle holds that "our sense of taste is more discriminating [than smell] because it is a sort of touch, which reaches in man the maximum discriminative accuracy" (*DA* II. 9, 421a18-20). He echoes this in *Sense and Sensibilia*, where he asserts that "man's sense of touch [...] excels that of all the other animals in fineness, and taste is a modification of touch" (*SS* 4, 441a1).

[31] When speaking of practical wisdom, Aristotle asserts that "[...] the man who is to be good must be well-trained and habituated [...]" (*EN* X.9, 1180a15).

glutton, who eats only because he seeks to satiate his appetite, or to experience pleasure. His enjoyment in eating and drinking consists in his indulgence of his capacity to touch, not to taste (*EN* III.10, 1118a30).[32] Since the sense of touch is the most widely shared amongst animals (1118b3), a human is in the most animalistic state when he employs an unrefined sense of touch. It is for this reason, Aristotle says, that "a certain gourmand prayed that his throat might become longer than a crane's, implying that it was the contact he took pleasure in" (1118a34-1118b1). The 'gourmand' in this case is not a gourmand at all; he is a self-indulgent glutton who fails to either reason or will well.[33] But the true gourmand, who is practically wise, seeks not to maximize his contact with food, but to engage his sense of taste by discriminating and appreciating the food's various flavours.

Aristotle's example of connoisseurship and taste offers us one example of an embodied excellence. The cultivation of the palate in this way can be taken to be an activity of human flourishing and self-care; by cultivating his palate, the subject can attend to his composite nature and live well, where 'living well' necessitates that he live, and act, with regard for his human condition. It is easy, when eating food, to employ only the sense of touch. But Aristotle suggests that learning how to *taste*, which requires a conscious discrimination of flavours, is a refined skill or embodied knowledge set that requires both practice and the use and development of a higher

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[32] Specifically, Aristotle asserts that self-indulgent people take pleasure in the actual enjoyment of food and drink, "which in all cases come through touch." This claim seems at odds with his previous claim that self-indulgent people can delight in the odour of unguents or of dainty dishes (see above, page 28, note 29), because delighting in odour does not require that the sense of touch be employed. These two claims may be reconciled if we acknowledge Aristotle's assertion that delight in the odour of unguents or of dainty dishes *reminds* a person of the objects of his appetite. Thus, even by reminding himself of his propensity to enjoy food by virtue of touch, he is self-indulgent.

[33] More specifically, gluttony comes about if the subject lacks either or both: (i) the ability to rationally determine that he should live up to his human capacities to the greatest extent possible; (ii) the will to make (i) possible, thus employing his senses as (i) necessitates.

level of embodied cognition. As a skill or knowledge set, it must be engrained on the palate; in the absence of bodily experience, an idea of what a seasoning will taste like can only help a person who seasons dishes to discriminate the flavours of a sauce to a limited extent. But the corporeal familiarity that comes with taste, which could conceivably differ between subjects, highlights the particularity and subjectivity of this form of practical excellence.

§ II.v: Cartesian Generosity: Embodiment and Descartes's Tree of Philosophy

Finally, Descartes, too, offers a conception of philosophy which necessitates engagement in a personal – and embodied – practice. Though he is a dualist (such that he believes that mind and body are substantially distinct), and though he does contend that the senses have the potential to interfere with intellectual knowledge, he does not wholly consider the body to be a thing to be disparaged. In the opening of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes's search for a knowledge of first principles, upon which all other knowledge may be based, requires that he turn away from his body and his senses, since sense perception could deceive him and lead him astray. If we consider only the *Meditations*, we may be inclined to take Descartes to condemn the physical, material body. But the *Meditations* constitutes only one aspect of Descartes's large philosophical corpus. If we go beyond the first meditation, where Descartes suspends his belief in what the senses tell him, and if we consider what relevance the *Meditations* bears for his larger philosophical system, it will become obvious that Descartes considers embodiment to constitute an important site for moral

virtue, happiness and wisdom.[34] In the "Preface to the French Edition" of the *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes writes:

> The whole of philosophy is like a tree. The roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches emerging from the trunk are all the other sciences, which may be reduced to three principal ones, namely medicine, mechanics and morals. By 'morals' I understand the highest and most perfect moral system, which presupposes a complete knowledge of the other sciences and is the ultimate level of wisdom. (AT IXB 14/ CSM I 186)

The first causes and principles which Descartes considers in the *Meditations* constitute the base of Descartes's 'tree of philosophy': they equip the subject with necessary knowledge about the world, about God and about himself which enables character development and, possibly, good action.[35] Descartes most thoroughly addresses the science of morals in *The Passions of the Soul*, where he locates moral virtue in the notion of generosity.

The virtue of generosity consists in a subject's highest esteem for himself. By knowing that he has free will and resolving to use his free will well (AT XI 446/CSM I 384), the generous subject can possess complete and continued command over his

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[34] For the moment, I wish only to suggest that Descartes's philosophical corpus does imply some esteem for embodiment. I locate this esteem in Descartes's notion of generosity, which I only very briefly sketch here. Any more exhaustive a treatment of Descartes's conception of embodiment far exceeds the scope of the present analysis. (For additional accounts of Descartes's positive view of embodiment, see especially Brown 2006, and Schmitter, forthcoming, both of which have influenced my reading of generosity here.)

[35] In the Preface, he warns, "I would not urge anyone to read this book except those who are able and willing to meditate seriously with me. And to withdraw their minds from the senses and from all preconceived opinions" (AT VII 10/CSM II, 8). But Descartes's often interpreted repression of the body contributes to only *one* aspect of the philosophical life he proposes.

passions, which, on Descartes's model, are bodily-based.[36] This requires that the generous subject connect the movements of his pineal gland to new thoughts.[37] Descartes considers the pineal gland to be the site at which the mind unites with the body. The movements of the animal spirits throughout the body, which makes the passions possible, originate at the pineal gland. By altering how the gland moves in response to certain thoughts, and thus, how the animal spirits run throughout the body, the Cartesian subject can ensure that he has full control over the passions that he feels. The generous subject will, for instance, no longer experience scorn or disdain at the thought of fulfilling the interests of others; rather, he will learn to experience scorn or disdain at the thought of fulfilling his own self-interest. Regardless of how convincing this model may or may not seem, we cannot fail to acknowledge that Descartes conceives of philosophy as a personal practice. The cultivation of the pineal gland over time is literally an embodied habit and personal transformation: happiness and wisdom consists in the exercise of moral virtue, which itself requires both intellectual knowledge and close attention to the body.[38] This attention to the body consists in a

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[36] Descartes tells us that passions of the soul are akin to bodily sensations (*sentimens*) or feelings (AT XI 350/CSM I 339). The passion of fear, for example, is both caused and sustained by particular movements of the animal spirits throughout the body. Descartes offers the example of encountering an animal: Its image is formed on the pineal gland. If the animal (or, more properly, this representation of the animal) is deemed to be unknown, strange or threatening, then the pineal gland will be moved in a way that stirs up the animal spirits and stimulates their movement throughout the body. The spirits move to the legs (which motivates the agent to flee the animal) and to the heart, where the passion seems most acutely experienced (AT XI 356/CSM I 342).

[37] Descartes contends: "It is useful to note here that [...] although nature seems to have joined every movement of the [pineal] gland to certain of our thoughts from the beginning of our life, yet we may join them to others through habit. [...] It is also useful to note that although the movements (both of the [pineal] gland and of the spirits and of the brain] which represent certain objects to the soul are naturally joined to the movements which produce certain passions in it, yet through habit the former can be separated from the latter and joined to others which are very different" (AT XI 370/CSM I 348).

[38] One might contend that, given its growth out of knowledge of first principles, Cartesian generosity is primarily an intellectual virtue: the Cartesian subject cannot be generous (and thus, virtuous) if he lacks the intellectual knowledge that he has a free will and that he can use his free will well. This is true. But

particular familiarity: the subject must become familiar with the unique, subjective feeling of how the animal spirits course through his body, as well as the feeling of how he may alter their direction via the manipulation of the pineal gland.

When we dig a little bit deeper into Descartes's philosophical corpus, it becomes evident that he offers us a personal practice of wisdom; it does not solely consist of a disembodied pursuit and apprehension of clear and distinct ideas via reason alone. To interpret Descartes as valorising rational judgement and treating the body as an encumbrance to all knowledge is symptomatic of an existing tendency to consider philosophy to be solely, or mostly, constituted by intellectual activity. Descartes takes great pains to make explicit that he considers the whole of philosophy to be *like a tree*… not just like the roots of a tree.

§ II.v: Preliminary Conclusions

For Plato, Aristotle, and even Descartes, philosophy constitutes a practice and a way of living that is consistent with the pursuit of a form of human excellence, conceived in relation to a specific understanding of human nature. Each conception of the philosophical life valorises reason proper, but none denigrates the body completely. In fact, each necessitates the cultivation of non-rational (though not necessarily non-cognitive) faculties and capacities, some of which are rooted in the body. Socratic self-care requires that the body be attended to (its appetites known, its desires consciously fulfilled, but not indulged), so that the practitioner may be better able to care for his tripartite soul and pursue its excellences. Furthermore, it requires that the philosopher (or philosopher-in-training) engage in exercises that cultivate his

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I wish to emphasize the extent to which the body, and most specifically the cultivated habituation of the pineal gland, is necessary to the fortification of virtue as well.

whole being: one cannot achieve knowledge if one lacks the courage (or steadfastness) and moderation that can only be developed through extensive physical training and musical education. Similarly, Aristotle makes room for what he identifies as practical wisdom, which requires constitutive excellences that respect the embodied nature of the human being. He suggests that within this context, self-care and flourishing can consist in, for example, the connoisseur's activity of taste. Finally, Descartes's *Passions of the Soul* completes the conception of philosophy that he begins to delineate in his *Meditations*. His notion of generosity, which requires self-knowledge (regarding one's free will) and knowledge of the world, is an embodied virtue: it reflects how a subject acts and moves within the world, due to his habitual management of his passions, via his manipulation of the pineal gland and animal spirits.

How does my analysis of the embodied philosophical life re-orient our assessment of the senses within a philosophical context? I wish to offer the above analyses as evidence for how some conceptions of philosophy as a way of life can demonstrate both literal and figurative esteem for senses other than vision. Modern interpreters often suggest that intellectual knowledge and rational judgement are modelled on vision.[39] This seems to be especially true for Descartes, who laces visual metaphors for knowledge throughout his texts, and who dedicates one essay to showing how philosophy can benefit human life by, for example, guiding the design of telescopes.[40] Plato suggests a similar priority given his emphasis on *eidos*, the

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[39] See Leder 1990, Jonas 1966, and Rorty 1980.

[40] Descartes tells us, "In the *Optics* my purpose was to show that one could make sufficient progress in philosophy to enable one to achieve knowledge of the arts which are beneficial for life; for the designing of telescopes [...] is one of the most difficult projects ever attempted" (AT IXB 15/CSM I 187). He

immaterial form or idea, which some note is etymologically rooted in 'visible image' (Leder 1990, 117). Vision, like rational enquiry and intellectual knowledge, has as its object the static, the immutable and the objective. It is true that Plato likens knowledge to 'seeing the light', and this could be taken to imply a denigration of, or at least disregard for, the other senses. But, as we have seen, Plato and Aristotle explicitly demonstrate literal esteem for the other senses in certain contexts: the pursuit of wisdom requires that the subject develop certain virtues, where these virtues value, or depend upon, particular senses and bodily capacities. Hearing (which facilitates an education in music and poetry) and touch (which is intrinsically bound up in strength building exercises, athleticism and dancing) are both important in this regard. So, while Plato's conception of philosophy may ultimately be directed towards the pursuit of static, immutable objects (*eidos*), his conception not only welcomes, but necessitates, the pursuit of dynamic objects as well. Education in music, for example, serves to foster a familiarity with and love of harmony, which, by its very nature, is the orderly combination of different tones and chords. In a similar way, Aristotle's formal hierarchy of the senses entails the possibility for increased capacities of discriminative taste: the temperate subject is temperate because he employs his senses in a way that is appropriate to his human nature.

Embodied philosophical practice also suggests esteem for the non-visual senses on a broader scale: the activity of self-care can be considered an analogy to senses that we generally consider to be more subjective and more mutable than vision. Each of the above renderings of philosophical personal practice is characterized by

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opens the *Optics* by contending that "since sight is the noblest and most comprehensive of the senses, inventions which serve to increase its power are undoubtedly among the most useful there can be" (AT VI 81/CSM I 152).

particularity and change – each personal practice, be it the form that Plato, or Aristotle, or Descartes advocates, is somewhat subjective. The process of cultivating embodied virtues, which is bounded by each subject's unique condition, requires that the subject engage in a process of personalized transformation. Some commentators explicitly contrast the stable, immutable objects of vision with objects of hearing, which they contend are constantly shifting, *becoming* (Leder 1990, 117; Jonas 1996, 138).[41] A similar claim can be made for objects of smell, touch and even taste. The process of self-care suggests moments of parallel variability: it can shift between moments of progress and moments of regression. For example, becoming a good athlete necessarily requires that the Socratic subject fall down once in a while; the project of learning how to taste and discriminate flavours necessitates that the Aristotelian subject learn how to become aware of and manage his appetite, though in the process he may still succumb to moments of gluttony; and the process of becoming a generous Cartesian subject, which requires a training and re-directing of the animal spirits, can only be built up over time. Climbing Descartes's tree of philosophy is a skill, and sometimes we may fall. When considered in this way, the road to virtue, happiness and the good life via philosophical practice presents itself as a process of *becoming*.

Ultimately, I do not wish to dispute the fact that Plato, Aristotle and Descartes privilege vision. Each of these authors makes explicit that they hold vision in highest

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[41] For example, in "The Nobility of Sight," Jonas contends: "[…] for our ears we have nothing corresponding to the lids of our eyes. One does not know when a sound may occur: when it occurs it gives notice of an event in the environment and not merely of its permanent existence: and since an event, i.e., a change in the environment, may always be of vital import, ears have to be open always for this contingency. […] With all the initiative left to the outer world, the contingency aspect of hearing is entirely one-sided and requires therefore continual readiness for perception. The deepest reason for this basic contingency in the sense of hearing is the fact that it is related to event and not to existence, to becoming and not to being. Thus hearing, bound to succession and not presenting a simultaneous coordinated manifold of objects, falls short of sight in respect of the freedom which it confers upon its possessor" (Jonas 1966, 138).

esteem. However, I believe that their models of philosophical practice do not denigrate the other senses to the extent that some modern interpreters may imply; in fact, the exercises that each of these authors suggest are constitutive of the philosophical life can even be taken to value the other senses (and the body from which these senses emerge). This alternative interpretation provides the context in which we may situate contemporary modes of philosophical practice. In the next section, I propose how the embodied practice of discriminative eating can develop certain virtues and offer opportunities for better living.

§ III: Towards a Philosophical Account of Taste and Eating

§ III.i: Introduction

In the previous section, I demonstrated how philosophical models that are often considered to valorise reason and objective, intellectual knowledge also demonstrate some regard for the body and the non-visual senses. Along these lines, I wish to suggest that current approaches to eating can be elevated from the mere satisfaction of a physical appetite to a higher-level process. By engaging in an activity of discriminative eating, we can weave the values to which we are committed throughout our embodied lives: though eating is not an activity of reason proper, we can shape it into a higher-functioning cognitive process, employ it in our cultivation of moral virtues and use it to open ourselves up to new – and embodied – opportunities. If we approach relief from hunger as an opportunity to make a virtue of necessity, we do not just attend to our bodies in times of need but also learn how to become more attuned to feeling and moderating our appetites over time. In what follows, I consider the project of 'discriminative eating.' My purpose in this chapter is to propose only one way in which attending to our embodied experience can contribute to philosophical practice, a life of flourishing, character development and, for some, better living.

I begin by considering what we stand to gain by attending to and refining our sensory experiences. Why might it be valuable to dedicate ourselves to discriminative eating practices and to cultivate our palates? Such an endeavour, I argue, has the potential to: shape our characters, while also instilling in us a manner of care and attention that can be exported to other activities and pursuits; open new windows to self-knowledge; and endow us with an 'embodied knowledge' that facilitates a deeper

connection with the food that we consume, leading to fuller eating experiences and enriching certain aesthetic and moral/socio-political projects. In the following sub-section, I consider more precisely how discriminative eating might unfold.

Before I begin, I wish to clarify my use of the term 'taste,' since a subject's taste experiences often rely on her use of other sensory capacities as well. Most wine instructors will emphasize to their students that one of the most important components of 'wine-tasting' consists in smelling the wine's aroma or bouquet;[42] and many culinary instructors will remind their students to pay particular attention to the visual aspects of the meals they produce, since people often 'eat with their eyes.' As I hope will become more evident throughout the course of this chapter, many of our 'taste' experiences rely on, or are informed by, other sensations. Vintners and sommeliers recognize this fact when they refer to wine-tasting as a process of 'organoleptic' evaluation, a term which encompasses the perception of visual, tactile, olfactory and taste sensations. I hesitate to use this term, however, because it suggests that a subject's perception is yielded only through physical means (or 'organs'). But our encounters with food and drink can blend physical and cognitive dimensions. Thus, from hereon in, I shall follow Korsmeyer's distinction between 'taste sensations' and 'taste experiences' to signal the difference between the specific activation of the taste buds and the all-encompassing engagement of the other senses, respectively (Korsmeyer 1999, 82).

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[42] Some contend that there are food items that lack taste properties altogether. The 'taste' of vanilla, for instance, is supposed to be derived solely from its aroma (Sweeney 2007, 124).

§ III.ii: Eating and Philosophical Practice: What Can We Gain From Cultivating Our Palates?

I define 'discriminative eating' as the practice of attentive eating whereby a subject seeks out and differentiates the tastes, textures and aromas of the food and drink that she consumes.[43] I discuss what such a project specifically entails in further detail below. For the moment, I will consider why anyone might be inclined to undertake such a project, and how it might contribute to the philosophical life. By eating with awareness and discrimination, we can shape our characters and forge new paths to self-knowledge. Such a practice of eating can lead to character flourishing by (i) cultivating the traditional virtues of moderation and steadfastness; (ii) developing a form of personal agency, which can lead to new phenomenological insights into our embodied condition; and (iii) establishing a manner of care and attention that can be applied to other endeavours. A corollary of this practice is the potential to improve our experience of daily life by cultivating new pleasures and developing a deeper, more profound connection with the food that we consume.

I begin by considering how a practice of discriminative eating can shape our characters. We can develop moderation by seeking to bring about the conditions that make this activity possible. Eating or drinking too much at one time can interfere with the ability to engage in such a practice. If we permit ourselves to become too full, then our attention will be diverted from the discriminative tasting experience to the sensation of being overly stuffed. And if we drink too much, then our capacity to attend to the discriminative components of our experience will likely be inhibited, or at

[43] I consider 'attentive eating' to consist not only in an awareness of sensations that are bold and attention-grabbing, but also in an intentional awareness of the more subtle, nuanced qualities of food and drink.

least severely dulled. Furthermore, discriminative eating requires that we carefully attend to our appetites for nourishment. It is difficult to attend to the various qualities of a food or drink item by eating or drinking it quickly. Since the ability to eat slowly and with attention can be heavily impeded by feelings of extreme hunger, we must work towards noticing and moderating our appetites.

Discriminative eating can develop steadfastness by requiring a commitment to self-training, practice, and guided habituation of the palate. It is a challenge to learn how to attend to the subtle complexities of food or drink, especially because it is so easy to slip into the blind, passive enjoyment of eating, drinking or satisfying an appetite. But, by bothering to discern the confected quality of a red zinfandel, for example, and tasting how it mingles with or precedes spicy or chocolate notes, we must attentively focus on our experience of the wine's properties, at least until our ability to discern those qualities is inscribed on our palates.[44]

If we consider ourselves to be and shape ourselves into rational agents who privilege immaterial, mental endeavours and de-value embodied ones, then we are apt to neglect or overlook the subtle qualities of our daily experiences of food and drink, or to be the passive subjects of taste experiences, wherein our attention is called to the physical sensations of bold, pleasurable or (seemingly) disgusting flavours, textures or aromas. But by searching out the subtle qualities of a food or drink item, which requires that we actively, and conscientiously, employ our senses, we can develop the characteristic of what I call 'personal agency.' By learning to employ the senses in this way, we can craft our taste experiences. The difference between passive eating and active eating is the difference between, for example, (a) only noticing that a

[44] I consider the notion of 'palate memory' more thoroughly below, see pages 44 and 62.

sauvignon blanc tastes fresh on the palate (or not noticing anything about it at all) and (b) attending to its high acidity and grapefruit and gooseberry notes. By weaving reflection and intentionality into our encounters with food and drink, we can transform the way in which we experience them, thus becoming more empowered in how we experience and move through the world. This practice also permits us to develop new knowledge about ourselves, and about how we interpret the same phenomenon in slightly different ways when we shift the focus of our attention.[45]

A corollary of this characteristic is the development of a manner of care and attention, and these characteristics (with moderation and steadfastness) can be useful when we approach other endeavours, activities or challenges. The consumption of food is one of the most basic necessities of human life. By attending to and fashioning our human condition in the manner of discriminative eating, we can develop new capacities for pleasures and pleasant living, thus enriching our experience of a necessary activity. The attitude with which we approach our appetites for, and consumption of, food can then represent a personal investment; it can also set a precedent for how we attend to other matters. To a limited extent, I echo here Samuel Johnson's famous statement, "[…] I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully; for I look upon it that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind any thing else" (quoted in Waingrow 1994, 329). However, unlike Johnson, I do not consider discriminative eating (or, as Johnson conceives it, 'minding the belly') to be a necessary condition to attending to other endeavours or projects. Rather, I suggest that discriminative eating (among other practices) can cultivate important virtues (such as

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[45] In §III.iii ("How Can We Cultivate Our Palates?"), I consider more concretely how employing the senses in different ways can transform our interpretations of taste experiences.

moderation, steadfastness, personal agency and care) that can (i) help us flourish personally and (ii) help us in other endeavours or projects.[46]

A practice of discriminative eating cultivates more than important virtues, however. The very cultivation of these virtues necessitates that we develop a new set of 'embodied' capacities. The cultivation of the palate requires that we not only turn our attention to experiencing food and drink, it also requires that we habituate our palates to the sheer variety of sensations that we encounter over time. For instance, it becomes easier to notice and identify the gooseberry aroma in a particular sauvignon blanc if we have already met some acquaintance with it, and retained its memory. While I discuss 'palate memory' in greater detail in the subsequent section, I wish to underline its potential value here. It is good not only because it represents the culmination of a project of personal care and investment (which I describe above), but also because it can facilitate a greater, more personal connection with the food and drink that we consume; this can bolster certain aesthetic and moral or socio-political projects oriented around food. Within the rapidly expanding literature on the philosophy of food, we can discern two general philosophical streams that address food, drink, eating and taste.[47] The first concerns food and drink as an aesthetic object; the second concerns food as a social, political or moral instrument. Both approaches

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[46] An alternative view, which I will not investigate here, might hold that a conscientious or intentional refusal to develop taste experiences, and thus a correlative distancing from potentially pleasurable, bold or disgusting sensations that such experiences afford, could develop the same virtues. (Asceticism, in the Christian sense, might approximate this approach.) In this case, though, one still must be highly attuned to one's body and appetites, as well as to the potential to experience strong sensations. It is important to note that this project of intentional, crafted dissociation from taste experiences is still a highly involved project, and thus is to be distinguished from the sheer neglect or ignorance of the body and its various capacities (which often characterizes the 'why should I bother paying attention to what I eat?' attitude). Note also that this intentional, crafted dissociative project could not be capable of supporting aesthetic and socio-political projects of food (which I describe below), as discriminative eating can.

[47] See especially Allhoff, ed. 2007; Allhoff and Monroe, eds. 2007; Curtin and Heldke, eds. 1992; Korsmeyer 1999 and 2005; Korthals 2004; and Telfer 1996.

ultimately seek to answer the question, 'what does it mean to eat well?', and certain forms of each approach can be enriched by the course that I propose.

Within the stream that considers the potential for an aesthetics of food, some argue that the value of food is contingent on the context in which it is consumed.[48] For example, in *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food*, Elizabeth Telfer argues that the value attached to food can be derived in part from the various pleasurable contexts in which food is consumed (Telfer 1996, 37-40). She includes celebratory occasions and acts of friendship and love under this rubric. In *Making Sense of Taste*, Korsmeyer also argues that the aesthetic significance of food and drink is furnished by its particular context, though Korsmeyer does not suggest that the context must necessarily be pleasurable. Korsmeyer asserts:

> [...] Foods seem to be heavily dependent on either ceremonial context or personal or cultural narrative to attain their cognitive and aesthetic significance. [...] Without the surrounding story and the history of ritual, the individual items on the Passover table are just things to eat; without the tradition of Zen philosophy, displayed equally in the setting, the utensils and the surroundings of the ceremony, the cup of tea is only a cup of tea. In short, foods and

[48] There is also a growing body of literature that argues that the aesthetic value of food is dependent on the actual tastes and smells that it incites in a subject. For example, David Prall argues that tastes and smells have some aesthetic value, though such value is limited because tastes and smells have no intelligible structure or order in variation (1967, 63). Telfer goes further: she suggests that despite a lack of structure or order to tastes and smells, food itself can be considered a minor art form. She argues that a work of art is a man-made entity that is created almost wholly for the purpose of aesthetic consideration (Telfer 1996, 44). Since recipes are vague and generally open to interpretation, cooking has the potential to be an art form. In fact, food is often "intended by their cooks to be [...] savoured, appraised, thought about, discussed" (46). Thus, the artistic value of food depends upon its ability to induce aesthetic reactions such as pleasure, interest and intrigue, exhilaration, awe in a subject, by virtue of its flavours and aromas (42; 51-52). For further discussion in this vein, see Douglas 1982; Monroe 2007; and Sweeney 1999 and 2007.

> their tastes appear to depend inordinately on defining context if they are to achieve the cognitive significance that I am claiming underwrites their aesthetic standing. (Korsmeyer 1999, 141)

Korsmeyer illustrates her approach with multiple examples, though I will draw only on her example of Thanksgiving meals. During a Thanksgiving meal the experience of turkey and dressing, candied yams and pumpkin pie is inflected and guided by the character of the event: the food is 'hot, savoury, heavy and plentiful' (Korsmeyer 1999, 137). But I believe that the experience of a Thanksgiving meal that underwrites its significance has the potential to be more than 'hot, savoury, heavy and plentiful'; this characteristic constitutes only one layer of the Thanksgiving experience, and it is one that guides most experiences of Christmas dinners too. Thanksgiving meals need not be simple sensory experiences, reduced to boisterous camaraderie, warm pumpkin pie and turkey-induced comas. They can be complicated – and enriched – by a subject's discrimination of citrus flavours in the cranberry sauce or attentiveness to the texture of the turkey meat. When partaking in a communal celebration of tradition, our relationship with the food can become deepened by our ability to discern the various flavours, textures and aromas. The multiple layers of a Thanksgiving meal (not only that it is 'hot, savoury, heavy and plentiful,' but also the taste and texture of the turkey meat and the pumpkin pie, for example) forge a deeper connection with this cultural narrative.

This point becomes more evident when we consider the value of food within a strictly personal narrative. Though neither Telfer nor Korsmeyer mention this example specifically, Marcel Proust's celebrated ode to the madeleine in *The Remembrance of*

Things Past--a narrative that confers personal meaning upon the madeleine--is useful here. The narrator documents his aesthetic experience of eating a madeleine. Though he 'mechanically' and inattentively raises a cup of tea to his mouth, he is surprised, upon tasting the crumbs immersed in the tea, to find himself transported back to his childhood, when his aunt would give him a piece of madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea on Sunday mornings (Proust 1981, 48-51). Hence, his taste of the madeleine, when inscribed with the memory of happy moments in his childhood, transcends the taste of the petit gateau that it really is.[49] One might argue that the narrator's personal, memory-imbued experience of the madeleine eclipses the narrator's ability to attend to the sensory qualities of the madeleine. Along these lines, one might point out that Proust's narrator ceases to feel contingent and mortal upon tasting the memory-inscribed madeleine crumbs: once his perception of the soggy madeleine crumbs on his tongue initiates a very personal, transcendent experience, his awareness of any taste sensations fades into the background. His attention is drawn to a value-laden madeleine, rather than to, for instance, the madeleine's often described subtle butter and lemon flavours, of which he makes no mention. And yet, we must remember that it is likely that the madeleine's subtle butter and lemon flavours, or soggy, tea-infused texture triggered his memory of the madeleine in the first place, thus situating the madeleine in a personal narrative. The sensory components of food and drink

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[49] Proust writes: "And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake [petites madeleines]. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory. [...] I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature" (Proust 1981, 48).

experiences are important to situating food and drink in a particular personal, cultural or ceremonial context.[50] The practiced ability to detect the various qualities of food and drink can only lead to a deeper relationship with the food and an intensified and enriched aesthetic experience in such contexts.

The practiced ability to eat discriminatively also serves, second, to reinforce certain moral and socio-political projects. Such eating practices may conceive of food as 'good' insofar as it is a product of sustainable farming practices, humane animal-rearing practices, fair trade contracts, and so on. This body of literature generally calls for a shift in the way we think about the food that we consume. It suggests that we consider the value of food not from a personal perspective, but from a global perspective which recognizes that the individual-consumer is implicated in a large, and often invisible, network of farmers, food producers, food retailers, food preparers, corporations, governments, scientists, and other consumers (Berry 1992, 377; King 2007, 178; Korthals 2004, 5, 30; Heldke 1992, 322 passim). So conceived, eating becomes a relational act. The moral, social or political status of eating certain foods depends upon how our consumption of them affects other participants in the network, or the network as a whole (King 2007, 188). It is our responsibility as consumers to recognize how we participate in this network, and to act, and eat, accordingly. In "Eating Well: Thinking Ethically About Food," Roger King frames this obligation as an 'ethics of seeing' and an 'expansion of our moral vision':

> [...] eating well means *opening our eyes* to the vast network of effects created by our eating practices. We must then *use what we*

[50] Discriminative eating may also motivate new ways in which sensory experience can be framed as a personal narrative. For example, the ability to detect an aroma of petrol in a Riesling can initiate one's memory of a happy or emotional arrival at the airport, for example.

> *see to guide* our consumption in ways that protect the health and integrity of the soil, the wellbeing of wild and domesticated animals, the health and rights of those people who work the world's fields and farms, and our own sense of self and community. (2007, 189; emphasis added)[51]

But within this context, an individual's ability to eat well is often removed from her ability to experience the food that she eats. In fact, never once in the entirety of his article does King use the terms 'taste', 'smell' or 'touch' to describe a subject's relationship with food. Perhaps it is paradoxical that even food, which is largely perceived by the proximate senses, is also a victim of ocularcentric discourse and study.

King's comments represent the more extreme end of a general trend within socio-political and moral analyses of eating to objectify the body as a tool to serve greater purposes; they generally demote the subject's sensory experience of the food. If the experiential body does not become secondary to these higher, rational ends, it becomes unimportant altogether.[52] Such an approach is unnecessarily narrow, and stands to benefit from encouraging a discriminative eating practice. Wendell Berry represents one exception to this approach. Though he does not allude to a practice of discriminative eating (at least of the sort that I here propose), he does recognize that the socio-political aspect of food can be importantly – and perhaps necessarily – connected with the aesthetic and ethical aspects. In "The Pleasures of Eating," Berry

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[51] See also King 2007, 184-185.

[52] Both King and Korthals suggest that eating well from a socio-political or moral perspective is distinct from eating well from an aesthetic perspective, an individual ethical perspective or a nutritional perspective (see Korthals 2004, 11, and King 2007, 181).

orients his project towards facilitating a relationship between participatory consumers and the first tier of food producers, thus arguing that eating is an agricultural act. He suggests that the health of this relationship (or at least the consumer's recognition that such a relationship even exists) is predicated on *tasting* and enjoying the food that the relationship serves to produce. Berry asserts:

> The food industrialists have by now persuaded millions of consumers to prefer food that is already prepared. They will grow, deliver, and cook your food for you and (just like your mother [sic]) beg you to eat it. That they do not yet offer to insert it, prechewed, into your mouth is only because they have found no profitable way to do so. We may rest assured that they would be glad to find such a way. The ideal industrial food consumer would be strapped to a table with a tube running from the food factory directly into his or her stomach. [...] If there is a food politics, there is also a food aesthetics and a food ethics, neither of which is dissociated from politics. [...] Industrial eating has become a degraded, poor, and paltry thing. Our kitchens and other eating places more and more resemble filling stations [...]. (Berry 1992, 375)

Though Berry presents a somewhat jarring and exaggerated image, he draws attention to the important ties between a consumer's participation in a large food network and her own sensory, embodied experience of food consumption. He urges us to question how we, as food consumers, have become absent from the large network that brings us our food.

I consider discriminative eating practices to support such projects because: (i) we cultivate our character, becoming more steadfast and attentive to issues that we consider to be significant; and, more importantly, (ii) we can become more connected to the food that we consume, and more able to recognize the importance of its related issues. At the very least, discriminative eating can help us 'open our eyes' (to use King's terminology) to moral and socio-political issues in the first place. But, enhanced taste experiences also have the potential to generate new insights and motivations into the moral or socio-political consequences of our choices, and to transform or strengthen the insights and motivations that we already have. For instance, discerning the various flavours and textures of a piece of steak, or even a fast food burger, can generate concern for how cows are raised and slaughtered, or how the burgers are manufactured. Furthermore, by attending to our eating experiences and seeking to improve our capacities for discriminative eating, we can potentially become more conscious of the subtle – and not so subtle – differences between similar food items that come to us via different foodways, or that undergo different modes of preparation. We can become more attuned to discerning the taste differences between a small, dusty, local strawberry and a large one that, despite its ripe and succulent appearance, has in fact been trucked in from three thousand kilometres away. The noticeable difference in taste experience could motivate - or reinforce - a concern for how the strawberries are cultivated, transported, stored, and sold.[53] Thus, by engaging in a practice of discriminative eating, where we not only consume food, but smell its

[53] The recently coined term 'locavore' illustrates how there may be an important connection between taste experiences and the environment. A locavore is a follower of the local food movement (also known as the '100 mile diet'). This movement aims to generate a concern for local food producers and their products in part by encouraging consumers to develop an appreciation of the unique taste experiences that such products bestow.

odours, taste its flavours and swallow its substance, we can become more fully attentive to the food that we consume, more concerned for the pathways by which it comes to us, and more bound to the soil from which it emerges.[54] Embodied knowledge has the potential to complement what is often framed as an intellectual (and disembodied) project.

§ III.iii: How Can We Cultivate Our Palates?

We are now in a better position to consider more precisely how a project of self-care via the cultivation of the palate may take shape. I believe that such a project necessitates a subject's (a) engagement in a practice of *active* (rather than passive) tasting; (b) recognition of and resistance to the effects of anticipation on her experience; (c) recognition of the effects of sensory bias on her thought processes and tastes experiences, and a correlative commitment to transform her experiences accordingly; (d) commitment to shaping taste experiences into a contemplative practice; and (e) inscription of (a)-(d) onto her self, by developing a 'palate memory.' I consider each of these five factors more comprehensively below.

(a) At the most basic level, cultivating the palate requires that a subject actively engage her sensory capacities when eating and drinking. For instance, most wine instructors call attention to the fact that there is a significant difference between drinking a wine and tasting a wine. Often, when an untrained or inattentive subject has a sip of wine, her body and sensory capacities recede from her awareness, only to call

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[54] The notion of '*terroir*' neatly encapsulates the connection between taste experiences and geographical origin and condition. *Terroir* refers to the regional conditions (including the mineral content of the soil, soil drainage, climate, elevation, etc) that impart distinctive qualities to a food or drink item. Generally, the term is used in the context of wine (especially Old World wine), but it is also used to describe the attributes of coffee, tea, cheese and chocolate. For further discussion on the *goût du terroir*, see Trubek 2005.

themselves forth when she senses an unpleasant, unexpected or pleasurable taste, texture or aroma. To *taste* a wine, however, requires that a subject initiate an awareness of both the wine's properties and her perceptual capacities. By recognizing and cultivating her own perceptual capacities, a subject will become more attentive to the factors that inform her experiences. Such factors include, but are not limited to, a sort of cognitive anticipation and a form of (unconscious) sensory bias.

(b) A subject's anticipation for what she will experience when she eats or drinks something can play out in one of two ways. In both ways, her anticipation for what she is about to taste may actually affect how she tastes it.

In the first case, a sharp and unexpected taste can take her by surprise, and can seem exaggerated compared to how she would experience the item under more neutral conditions (without any particular form of anticipation). The following example illustrates this effect: On a hot day, a subject sees a red, carbonated beverage which she understands to be a Campari and soda. Having never before tasted Campari, the bright ruby red colour of the beverage reminds her of a sweet grenadine-based drink that she tasted last week. She orders a Campari and soda, takes one sip and finds herself shocked by what she perceives to be an overwhelmingly bitter taste. On this particular occasion, she experiences the Campari and soda to be far more bitter than at any subsequent time, when she has the drink knowing what to expect.

In the second case, a subject's expectation that she will perceive a certain sensation might lead her to believe that she actually perceives that sensation. Some wine scholars account for this phenomenon as a process of 'suggestion' (Peynaud 1996, 110). In a recent experiment on the effects of anticipation on taste, Frédéric

Brochet, a researcher at the University of Bordeaux, demonstrated that a subject's preconceptions about the nature and quality of the wine can determine how she perceives it. Brochet's experiment asked fifty-seven participants to taste two different wines, one week apart from one another. On the first occasion, he informed the participants that they were drinking a simple table wine. The following week, he informed the participants that they were drinking a prestigious *grand cru* Bordeaux. On each occasion, he asked the participants to appraise the quality of the wine they tasted. Brochet noted that the participants' respective appraisals of the wines reflected how they conceived of each wine's quality, since the participants actually tasted the same average wine on both occasions, neither a table wine nor a *grand cru*. The participants were overwhelmingly impressed by what they thought was the *grand cru*, and decidedly unimpressed by what they thought was the simple table wine (Brochet 2001, 10-11).

My aim in citing this study is not to suggest that this is how we all experience ourselves. Rather, it is to illustrate that even when we attempt to engage actively and attentively in a sensory activity such as wine-tasting, we can still be inclined to privilege intellectual information (or 'known fact') over sensory information, or unconsciously question the quality of our bodily and sensory capacities. So, in this example, by permitting seemingly concrete information (i.e. that the two wines are different, where one is superior to the other) to inform her perceptual experience of the wine, the subject disregards the information she perceives by her sensations (i.e. that the two wines, and the correlative sensations that they stimulate, are not distinct from one another). Given that it is possible to sample two glasses of the exact same wine

and claim to perceive a difference between the two (in this case, quite a substantial difference), there seems to be a difference between a subject's 'interpretation' of taste and her 'experience' of it. The cultivation of the palate aims to align the two. By valuing her sensory capacities and attributing some authority to them (rather than privileging what seems to be concrete information), a subject has the potential to transform her interpretation of her taste experiences, often creating a more profound, layered encounter with the food or drink item in question.

(c) A subject's cultivation of her palate also requires that she be attentive to how all her senses inform her overall perceptual experience (which encompasses both her thinking and sensory processes). Each of the senses can play a unique role in furnishing a taste experience, and the cultivated palate recognises this fact.[55] But, since the very way in which we exercise vision necessitates that it recede from our awareness to the greatest extent possible, and since it is often the first means by which we perceive a food or drink item, we can become inclined to assume that its perceptions are more objective, accurate, and trustworthy than the perceptions directly yielded by our other senses. This assumption can impact how we experience taste sensations. In some cases, it can become quickly evident that the visual information is discordant with the rest of the taste experience. This is sometimes the case in molecular gastronomy, when chefs play on common understandings of textures and flavours and intentionally attempt to deceive the eye.[56] But when the difference

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[55] Vision, touch and, in some cases, hearing, can each play unique roles in a taste experience. Taste sensations and aromatic sensations are far more bound up in one another since most of what we consider to constitute taste is actual perceived by retro-nasal olfaction.

[56] For instance, a popular technique within molecular gastronomy, which applies physical and chemical principles to cooking, is known as 'spherification.' Spherification is a chemical process applied to food purée that produces small, jellied balls that take on a caviar-like appearance. So, one eats something

between the visual information and the aromatic and taste information is far more subtle, in cases such as wine-tasting, it can be difficult to acknowledge and value the unique role that aromas and taste sensations play in a taste experience.

In a formal wine-tasting setting, a subject's taste experience of wine always follows a five-step process. The taste experience commences with a visual evaluation: the subject appraises the wine's clarity, colour and intensity. The subject then takes a quick sniff of the wine so as to ensure that there are no impurities or faults. She then swirls the wine to release the aromas, and puts her nose to the glass to perceive those aromas. Finally, the subject takes a sip of the wine, and she continues to simultaneously inhale its aromas. The final stage consists of a period of reflection or post-tasting evaluation. It is in this final stage that a subject must weigh all of the perceptual information (visual, olfactory, taste, and tactile) so as to determine the wine's varietal and origin during a 'blind tasting' exercise.[57] However, as any wine education student will quickly learn, it is perhaps too easy to let the visual information garnered in the first stage guide how she experiences the wine in the latter stages. For instance, if she perceives the wine to be pale to medium ruby in colour, she might guess that the wine could be a gamay noir. As such, she might search out what she identifies to be typical aromas and flavours of a gamay noir. She may perceive strawberry, cherry, and raspberry aromas to the exclusion of the wine's earthy, barnyard-y aroma. Thus, she could experience the wine to be a gamay noir (or, what

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that looks very much like caviar, but (unexpectedly) bursts with the aromatic and taste sensations of melon, for example. For further discussion of molecular gastronomy, see This 2005.

[57] Blind tastings are a standard training tool in wine education and sommelier classes. Subjects must taste a wine and evaluate its properties in the absence of any knowledge about it (including what type of wine it is and where it came from). Somewhat counter-intuitively, 'blind' tastings are not actually done blind; visual evaluation of the wine is an important component of the exercise. Hence, it is interesting to note that the term 'blind tasting' refers only to the fact that the subject does not know what the wine *is*, thus reflecting a connection between vision and objective or verifiable knowledge.

she identifies to be a gamay noir), even though the wine is actually a pinot noir from Burgundy. The sequential structure of a formal wine-tasting encourages our privileging of visual information, though our potential to experience food and drink in this way goes well beyond this setting. Sequentially, our experience of food and drink almost always begins with visual processes. Thus, our tastes experiences are almost always informed by our preceding visual perceptions.

Another study conducted by researchers at the University of Bordeaux illustrates our potential to bias certain types of sensory information during an informal wine perception activity. The researchers suggest that subjects often privilege visual information when discriminating a wine's aromas. They designed a wine comparison test that consisted of two sessions, conducted one week apart from one another. In each session, they provided participants with two glasses of wine, and permitted them to compare and taste the wines as they wished. Neither session consisted of a formal wine-tasting; the participants were only required to focus their attention on the wines' aromas. In the first session, they provided participants with a white wine and a red wine and asked the participants to (i) describe the aromas of each wine and (ii) determine which of the two wines more intensely exhibited the aromas from a given list of aroma-descriptors. In the second session, the researchers provided each participant with their respective aroma-descriptors list (the list that they had personally drawn up in the previous session). They then presented the participants with two glasses of wine, a white wine and a 'red' wine. In fact, both glasses contained the same white wine that the participants had sampled in the first session: the 'red' wine, in this case, consisted of the white wine coloured with an unscented red dye. The

researchers then asked the participants to identify which of the two wines most exhibited each aroma on their personal descriptor list. When evaluating the 'red' wine during the second session, the researchers found that the participants had failed to use the same aroma-descriptors that they had previously applied to the white wine (Morrot et al. 2001, 312-313).[58] The authors of the study conclude, "The white wine was perceived as having the odour of a red wine when coloured red. The wine's colour appears to provide significant sensory information, which misleads the subjects' ability to judge [aromas]" (316). For our present purposes, what is at issue is not *how* the aromas of the red wine are described in comparison to how the aromas of the white wine are described. More important, rather, is *that* there is a perceptible difference between these two. The study's participants claimed to perceive a substantial difference in aroma in both the first and second sessions; the fact that they were able to perceive such a difference in the second session (where there was not one) can be attributed to the way in which they privileged visual information. Upon seeing a red wine, they looked for, and thus believed themselves to perceive, properties that they generally associate with a red wine. Their perception of the wine's colour thus informed how they thought about the wine (i.e. that the wine is red, and that they should perceive red wine-like aromas) to the detriment of the quality of their experience; it primed how they actually thought about and smelled the wine.

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[58] It should be noted that the authors of this study controlled for the fact that individuals may perceive odours and flavours differently from one another: "In order to get around the interindividual chemosensorial differences of the tasters, the comparative test did not require the use of a consensual language. [...] During the second session, tasters were asked to use the same list of terms as they themselves chose to use during the first session. This gave us the possibility to compare the descriptions in the two experiments, while allowing the tasters to describe the wines in their own terms" (Morrot et al., 2001, 312).

To avoid this effect during tasting exercises, Burgundian wine expert Pierre Poupon advises to "ignore the bottle, label and those around you; concentrate instead on yourself and on forming a clear impression of the developing sensations conveyed by the wine. *Close your eyes and use your nose, tongue, and palate to see*" (Peynaud 24; emphasis added). This is a useful technique when learning how to experience and discern taste and aromatic sensations in themselves. But, vision, too, can constitute part of the palate. Beyond formal wine-tasting, and during everyday eating experiences, we must learn not only to employ our senses of taste, smell, touch (and sometimes, hearing), but to consider reflexively how our visual perceptions might inform (or overly-inform) our taste experience of food and drink.

(d) In the initial stages of learning how to cultivate the palate especially, one must approach the taste experience as a contemplative one. This means that rather than just attending to a taste experience because some sensation boldly announces itself, one must seek out the subtle nuances, qualities and various layers of the experience that can often, and too easily, go unnoticed. I consider how taste experiences can be contemplative by beginning with Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's legendary model of the taste experience.[59] Brillat-Savarin distinguishes between direct, complete and reflective taste experiences (Brillat-Savarin 1949, 40). He claims that a direct taste experience is the initial sensation that a subject feels in her mouth, when food or drink hits the front end of the tongue. A subject's initial experience of tart freshness when

[59] Many philosophical inquiries into practices of eating include at least some mention of Brillat-Savarin, an early nineteenth century French gastronome (e.g. Korsmeyer 1999 and 2007; Shaffer 2007, Telfer 1996). Though not a philosopher, Brillat-Savarin undertook a comprehensive, philosophically-inflected investigation of gastronomy. His primary work, *The Physiology of Taste: Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, seeks to determine why, what and how we should eat. One philosopher, Kevin Sweeney, even interprets this work to constitute Brillat-Savarin's response to Kant's Third Critique, where Kant denies that gustatory experience can constitute an aesthetic experience (Sweeney 2007, 123-124).

eating a peach can be accounted for by this category, for example. The complete taste experience is comprised of this initial (direct) taste experience and any subsequent sensations that a subject perceives as the food or drink moves to the back of her mouth and "attacks the whole organ with its taste and its aroma" (40). At this point, the full aroma of the peach becomes more evident, since as it moves to the back of the mouth it passes under the subject's nasal channel. Brillat-Savarin describes the final stage of tasting, the reflective taste experience, as a cognitive process. It is "the opinion which one's spirit forms from the impressions which have been transmitted to it by the mouth" (40). It is only after a subject swallows that she can truly consider the characteristics peculiar to the peach, for instance. Others have adopted Brillat-Savarin's model of the taste experience. In "Taste Perception, Scepticism and Gastronomic Expertise," Michael Shaffer appropriates Brillat-Savarin's distinction between direct and reflective taste experiences so as to suggest that gastronomic experts do not have a special sensory acuity, but only possess a more sophisticated ability to engage in reflective tasting, which is cognitive in nature (Shaffer 2007, 77).

Brillat-Savarin's model of the taste experience implies a necessary distinction between sensory tasting and reflective tasting. Perhaps we can make these distinctions sequentially, though I do not believe that we must make such distinctions conceptually as well. That is, I do not take sensory tasting and reflective tasting always to be mutually exclusive: direct taste experiences have the potential to be contemplative in nature as well. This becomes evident when we consider the different ways in which direct taste experiences manifest themselves. The first two ways I describe are often automatic and attention-calling, and they require little work on the part of the subject;

the third way, on the other hand, is constitutive of the active, intentional taste experience that I take to be part of discriminative eating. We have one sort of direct taste experience when a particular sensation announces itself to us unexpectedly. In such cases, the taste sensation seems to be either out of place or far more intense than we had originally anticipated it being. The subsequent recognition, 'oh, this is not what I had expected, but actually, it is pretty good' constitutes the sort of cognitive aesthetic appraisal that Brillat-Savarin believes to occur during the reflective stage. We have another sort of direct taste experience when we seek, or are overcome by, pleasurable taste sensations, or when we encounter what we deem to be disgusting ones. For example, if a subject has a particular affinity for ice wine, she may not concern herself with noticing certain acidic and sweet taste sensations, or even her increased salivation. She does, however, experience a refreshing, pleasant sensation at the very moment that the wine hits her tongue. Her subsequent appraisal that the wine is very good follows from her direct tasting experience, and it is only at this time that she would reflect on the wine's acidity and sweetness. (This is likely the scenario that Brillat-Savarin has in mind when he distinguishes between direct and reflective taste experiences in the first place, since he ultimately directs his project to determining how humanity can eat most pleasurably.)

A third sort of direct taste experience that we can have differs in nature from these others, and fostering this sort of taste experience constitutes the cultivation of the palate. For example, a subject can taste a tomato sauce and discriminate the extent to which it is both acidic and sweet; she may also recognize that just because she sees ground meat and feels it on her tongue does not necessarily entail that gamey or beefy

flavours must be particularly salient to her taste experience. The activity of discriminating flavours, textures and aromas requires that a subject concentrate on crafting a taste experience. I take this sort of taste experience to be contemplative, then, insofar as she determines which sensations are most salient by focusing herself on the nuances of certain taste, tactile and aromatic sensations, while remaining open to experiencing new and unexpected ones.[60] This contemplative process can extend beyond the direct stimulation of her sensory capacities, and beyond swallowing. For instance, a wine's 'finish,' the lingering impression of the wine's flavour and body, can last for multiple seconds, and sometimes even for a minute or two.[61]

(e) By developing a 'palate memory', a subject can further develop her capacity to engage in a practice of tasting. Her ability to discriminate tastes, textures and aromas can be strengthened if she can call on components of previous taste experiences, or the on imagined combinations of such components. It also requires that she conscientiously employ certain sensory capacities in other aspects of her embodied life. Her palate memory can be broadened by, for example, smelling produce while she shops, inhaling the scent of freshly cut grass while she walks, and feeling and tasting the sensations of salt water while she swims. Emile Peynaud, an oenology scholar, emphasizes the value of memory when he contends that "a tasting note on a wine will no more make it instantly recognizable than a verbal description of somebody's face" (Peynaud 1996, 26). His assertion suggests that there exists a

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[60] When describing how to taste wine properly, Peynaud emphasizes that a subject must concentrate on particular properties in a wine and yet remain open to experiencing other sensations as well. He adds that "meditation is a useful discipline in this respect" (Peynaud 1996, 24).

[61] So, my conception of the taste experience differs from Brillat-Savarin's, which begins only when the subject takes the food or drink item in her mouth; Brillat-Savarin's conception fails to fully account for a subject's all-encompassing taste experience, which begins with visually perceiving food, and can include smelling and touching it as well. This fact is particularly important when we consider that, and how, a direct taste experience can be contemplative (and not solely sensory) in nature.

parallel between vision and the other sensory capacities. In vision, a subject recalls an image by seeing that image in her 'mind's eye.' But with a complex sensory process such as a taste experience (which includes not only visual sensations, but taste, olfactory, tactile and sound sensations too), a subject can best recall an impression by feeling that impression on her palate. Thus, it is not sufficient that a subject merely describe or articulate a taste experience so as to aid her in parsing future experiences. Rather, she must seek to inscribe such experiences upon her palate, so that she may reflexively draw on such inscriptions during future tastings; her recollection can thus become almost bodily in nature. When a subject with a somewhat trained palate (who therefore possesses some degree of a 'palate memory') eats discriminatively, she too engages in a contemplative practice: discriminative eating in this capacity still requires that a subject seek out the subtle nuances, qualities, and layers that a taste experience can offer, but this process becomes much easier to engage in when that subject has previous experience on which to draw. It represents the difference between, for example, discerning an aroma of 'red berries' in a glass of California pinot noir, when really what she could be sensing is a cherry aroma (and a bing cherry aroma at that!).

§ III.iv: Concluding Thoughts

At this point, two questions emerge. First, one might question whether the project of cultivating the palate requires any knowledge about the nature and qualities of food and drink. Would it help to know that bing cherries generally characterize pinot noirs that are grown in warmer climates? While such knowledge might help, it is by no means necessary; for some, it could even serve to derail the project by motivating them to 'search' for a bing cherry aroma, thus closing themselves off to

other potential or latent sensations. The activity of discriminative eating does not require knowledge about particular food or drink products so much as it requires, or is at least facilitated by, a subject's personal knowledge of how certain aromas, flavours and textures might manifest themselves. So, while the knowledge that a bing cherry aroma characterizes warm climate pinot noirs is not necessary, the 'knowledge' (which I take to be a sort of embodied knowledge, or personal familiarity) of what bing cherry smells and tastes like could be very useful to a practice of discriminative eating.

The second question that emerges is whether, in keeping with the theme of cherries, we can get as much out of training our palates by discriminatively drinking cherry cola than we can by discriminatively drinking a California pinot noir. The answer, I believe, is: it depends. Few people will argue that cherry cola is as complex a product as a California pinot noir (at least when we consider them according to the sensory experience that they each afford, and not according to their respective molecular compositions or ingredient lists). Person A, who has a thoroughly untrained palate, might not benefit from discriminatively drinking the pinot noir as much as Person B, who has a higher level of training and practice. This is not to suggest that we must begin with simpler substances such as cola or grape juice if we are to engage in a project of palate cultivation and discriminative eating. It only emphasizes the fact that discriminative eating is a skill, and discerning all of the qualities of a more complex item requires practice and self-training.

Finally, one might object to the project of cultivating our palates by claiming that, in doing so, we make ourselves more susceptible to experiencing suffering and discomfort. That is, one might argue that by developing a more refined palate, we

become more sensitive to defects and flaws: if we cannot afford or gain regular access to what we consider to be better products, do we really want to cultivate our sensory capacities and thereby subject ourselves to the products that we know to be lacking in quality or complexity? Would it not be better, and less painful, to dissociate ourselves from our sensory experiences if we cannot regularly afford to drink top-end pinot noirs? There are multiple responses to this objection. I do acknowledge the possibility of an alternative practice, a conscientious and intentional refusal to develop taste experiences, which could develop the same virtues that I consider discriminative eating to cultivate.[62] But a practice of discriminative eating can lead to a fuller life by both developing these virtues and forging a closer, more profound relationship with the food that we consume. This has the potential to benefit our engagement in certain aesthetic, moral, or socio-political aspects of food. It also, by corollary, can help us to enjoy the food and drink items that we *do* have access to, and perhaps even challenge us to find and enjoy items that might parallel the ones beyond our usual reaches.

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[62] See above, page 44, footnote 46.

§ IV – Conclusion

In the opening pages of many philosophical commentaries, we find reminders or small lessons on how philosophy is a love of wisdom (*'philo' – 'sophia'*). Many of these commentaries imply, or at least leave themselves open to the interpretation, that wisdom is comprised only (or primarily) of the intellectual pursuit of coming to know Truth. I hope to have demonstrated that some of the figureheads who are often widely held up in support of this position actually resist such a reductive interpretation. Philosophy does find its roots in a love of wisdom, but wisdom, for Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and likely many others, encompasses more than a valorisation of reason; it consists in the activity of living well. Despite what living well may partly entail in each case (be it character flourishing and personal transformation, or 'generosity' and moral action, etc.), it often recognises – and in some ways seeks to perfect – our embodied condition.

A re-evaluation of Plato's training program for philosophy, Aristotle's view of character flourishing, and Descartes's notion of generosity *qua* embodied moral virtue demonstrates how each contribution to the art of living philosophical tradition suggests only a weak form of ocularcentrism. Their models are ocularcentric because vision operates as an analogy for rational enquiry, and because vision itself is widely exalted as the superior sense. Each author does valorise vision, but none altogether denigrates the other senses, and the philosophical life that each model renders encompasses more than rational enquiry. Each model suggests that the good life can only come about if the practitioner cultivates certain embodied virtues: Socrates delineates the benefits of

athletic training and music training; Aristotle makes room for the connoisseur of taste; and Descartes offers us the notion of generosity, a virtue which reflects a subject's command over his human passions (which are felt in the body). These models suggest some esteem for the other, less objective senses literally, but also by analogy. While the philosophical life does valorise an immaterial, immutable truth, it includes more than gazing at the bright, dazzling Forms. As styles of philosophical practice, the cultivation of embodied virtues is a process that is particular, proximate and constantly evolving, becoming.

It is in this vein that I situate my present project. While I hesitate to make blanket statements about what philosophy as a discipline is, or must be, I wish to offer my project as a gesture to what philosophy could be, or at least could encompass. The practice of discriminative eating offers us the opportunity to re-evaluate our lived experience, as human beings who get hungry, who consume food and who have the sophisticated potential to discern aromas, flavours, textures, etc. By attending to our bodily experience at the time of hunger, we can cultivate new opportunities for virtue and character flourishing, enrich other philosophically-oriented projects, and lead fuller, more carefully crafted lives. If we consider hunger not as a calling out by an empty tank that requires filling, but as an occasion for weaving reflection and a higher level cognition throughout our embodied, human lives, we may enable ourselves to stylise richer experiences of and connections with the food that we consume, while also developing capacities for better living.

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